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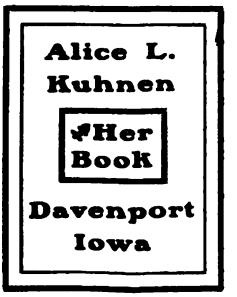
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Two Women & a Fool

BY

H. C. Chatfield-Taylor

WITH PICTURES BY

C. D. Gibson

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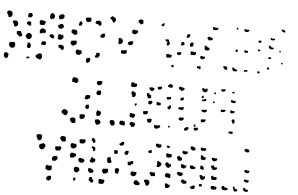

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I.

"A fool's heart and a woman's eyes."
Timon of Athens.

LIGHTS gleam in the amber bubbles as Moira raises her glass. She smiles. Does she mean to pledge me in a toast? No, her eyes grow thoughtful. She places the glass on the table and gazes at the blue-white cloth.

I watch her intently. To my artist's eye her delicate skin, with its enigma of tints, and her wavy folds of reddish hair form a perfect Titian harmony. But her power lies in those dreamy brown eyes with the curling lashes and arched brows. Yes, a woman's eyes reveal the ideality of her nature; her lips its reality. Moira's eyes penetrate, insinuate, mystify, but her lips are luxurious, im-

pulsive, passionate. Her eyes allure; her lips incite.

She looks up. A smile creeps stealthily across her face, then vanishes. She lifts her glass again. I watch the flitting bubbles.

"Guy," she says, "Champagne is like love, inspiring while the sparkle lasts, sickening when the life is gone."

"Yes, and like love there is but one remedy for it."

"What is that?" she asks.

"Get a fresh bottle, find a new inspiration."

She throws herself back against the cushions of the divan. Her white shoulders sink into the folds of silk.

"I see you are sampling a new vintage, Guy. Come, tell me what she is like."

She laughs as she says this; laughs so that her musical voice echoes through the room, but her eyes are mysterious still.

"Tell me what she 's like," she repeats.

"What who 's like?"

"Why, the she. The one you would like to love if you could make up your mind to forget me."

I feel myself grow red.

"Dear old Guy, silly old Guy, as an artist you are a tolerable success, but if you should ever try to act you 'd be hissed off the first night. I 'm a woman, Guy."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Why for us women the mind of a man is far easier to dissect than those frog's brains we used to cut up at college. You remember them, do n't you, Guy? A sombre room, rising tiers of seats, a hundred students, each pair with a board between them, half as many frogs, a scowling prof., and — Ugh! it 's too terrible to think of. How did I endure such a life even for a term?"

"I don't see yet what frog's brains have to do with your absurd statement," I interrupt.

"You are irrelevant;" she says, throwing a piece of bread across the table, and, womanlike, missing my head by a foot or two. "You must n't interrupt; I have the floor, and mean to talk."

"About frogs?"

"No, about you."

"A far more interesting topic."

"To you perhaps, but it is time you knew that man is the lowest form of vertebrate. He has n't half as much backbone as a—as a—oh, what do you call it? As an amphioxus. You see it did me some good to go to college after all."

"Of course, otherwise you would not have met me."

"If you interrupt again, I 'll spill candle grease on you. Now, let me see, what was I saying? O yes, no wonder I forgot. It was you. No, it was n't, it

was the She. You want me to tell how I know about her?"

I glance at the table and play with the stem of my glass. Her inscrutable eyes are gazing at me, but I dare not look up.

"Guy," she continues, seriously, "just think back thirty-six hours. You came into the train at Crestline, or some such place. I thought you would come on to New York. We played there six weeks, you know. Perhaps you do n't. Perhaps I did n't interest you sufficiently to find out. But that is neither here nor there. You came into the car and gave me a bunch of pink roses in a sheepish sort of way, then you plunged your hands in your pockets and sat and looked out of the window. You had n't spirit enough to take up our quarrel of last spring; you never looked me in the eye once, and you did n't even flirt with the chorus girls, though we 've got some uncommonly pretty ones this season.

Oh, Guy, I knew there was something up directly I saw you; if I needed further proof I had it. Do you remember your dinner engagement last night? Of three weeks' standing, was n't it, though from the awkward way you invented it I 'll wager you have n't had a dinner engagement since you left Brompton."

"I happen to have had that one. Smart people, too; that 's why they invited me so far ahead. Mrs. Watterson is coming to the studio to-morrow. I wish I could sell her that cumbrous "Schumann Sonata" of mine. Smart people know nothing about pictures, you know, but perhaps that is lucky for us painters."

"That has nothing to do with the dinner," Moira interrupts. "You 'd like to change the subject, would n't you?"

"Do you know Moira, you 're a sort of love-phœnix, you would rise unscatched from a thousand flames."

"That 's the first compliment you have paid me since we parted in London last May. It 's September now. But you can 't shunt me like that. We 've only accounted for your behaviour up to dinner last night; how about supper?"

"I told you to rest then, to-night being a first night, you know."

"Were you ever so considerate of my health before? How about the rehearsal to-day? You know you always have the run of the theatre when I sing."

"I 'm working hard now. I had to paint."

"Yes, I know all that, and so you had to sit in the stalls to-night and look as glum as a hired mourner when I smiled my sweetest and shot my tenderest glances at you, which of course I did n't do, for that Frenchman, d'Argenteuil, was next you. He appreciates them more than you do. By the way, he has grown good looking since he left London."

"D'Argenteuil good looking! Picturesque, yes; but good looking—O, I say, that's too ridiculous."

"Not nearly as ridiculous as you sitting there and trying to pretend there's no She. I know all about her except her name, and you will tell me that before the evening is over."

"Not if I know it."

"Good. So you acknowledge there is one?"

"No, I do n't."

Moira laughs.

I leave my chair and pace the floor.

"Hearts are like chemical elements," she says. "To a union of two add a third and an explosion results."

I do not reply. Stopping before the mantelpiece, I examine the pictures in a long folding frame. Moira's apartment is in a quiet Michigan Avenue hotel. I have seen such rooms before. Gilded chairs with resplendent plush upholstery, thick stuffy curtains, walls

papered in ill blending hues, a spongey flower bedecked carpet, a general air of ill assorted lavishness. But Moira can make even such a place livable. A vase of flowers, a bit of old stuff, a few oriental pillows, some screens or photographs, give that cheerless lodging a dash of cosiness.

Scanning the photographs in the frame before me I recognize a few of them. There are women in evening dress, or tights, with frizzled hair and wasp-like waists, with big celestial eyes and little earthy mouths; women whose faces call forth memories of pretty St. John's Wood villas, or sombre little Kensington houses, where flowering window boxes and delicate curtains give the passer by the merest nibble at the daintiness within. There are men, too; some of them mere boys in man's attire, clean cut, well groomed, with fresh young faces, trustful eyes and pliant mouths; some older with thinnish hair,

cruel eyes and callous features; and others older still, with sleek bald spots and unctuous jowls, bushy eye-brows and turgid eyelids. I know most of them. I have seen them blushing in the stalls, standing in the wings, or waiting at the stage door of the Frivolity Theatre, Strand. In a frame by itself is my own picture.

"You honor me, Moira," I say, turning towards her.

She is lighting a cigarette. Occasionally one meets a woman who has a dainty, piquant way of holding a cigarette which disguises the vulgarity of the action. Moira is one. She blows out the match and drops it into an ash tray with a fascinating little gesture.

"Guy," she says, sending a puff of blue smoke upward, and motioning to the seat beside her on the divan, "come here."

She smiles.

The moment before I was angry be

cause she read my mind too clearly. There may be a man whose resentment her smile would aggravate, but I am not he.

Reluctantly, ignominiously it seems to me, I saunter towards the table. The remnants of a supper are there. Rumpled napkins, half burned candles, salad stained plates, crumbs of bread, the carcass of a bird. Usually the picturesqueness of such a disorder would appeal to me, but to-night that phantom of a feast nauseates me. I have experienced the same feeling before, when the morning after a carouse I throw back the curtains in my studio and the glaring sunlight bursting into the gloom, dazzles my bloodshot eyes; when my temples throb and my lungs inhale the close air of overnight with its vapid odor of smoke and stale wine.

Why should I be so affected now, I wonder. Is it because the ego is but a jumble of nerve centres fed by the

stomach; because our capacity for pleasurable impression is controlled by the state of the gastric juices?

I blow out the candles, push the table away, and take the seat beside Moira.

"Have a Morris cigarette, Guy?" she says, reaching for a little silver case I once gave her. "I don't believe you can get them here."

"No, thanks, I won't smoke," I answer almost gruffly.

Moira laughs.

"Dear, naughty, old boy," she says; "if you keep on thinking about Her you'll make me jealous, and then I may love you."

She blows a puff of smoke into my face. It makes me cough. She laughs again.

"Moira," I say, "be serious."

"I can't be that. Nothing makes me serious but a bad dinner. I am feeling too well to-night. By the way, how do you like my new crescent? Lord Kilda

gave it me when I was leaving London. Look at the size of the stones. I wonder if his wife has any as big? Oh, these men, Guy, especially the married ones."

"Oh, these women, Moira, especially the ones like you."

She looks up into my face. A subtle perfume rises from her hair. For a moment I hold her in my arms and feel the velvety warmth of her cheek on my lips. For a moment only, for she pushes me back and darts away, her laughter rippling through the room.

"Guy! Guy!" she exclaims. "So that 's what you call being serious."

I rush after her.

"Moira, I 'm mad," I cry. "Maddened, intoxicated by you."

She turns and stands there with her head thrown back imperatively, her little figure made commanding by its authoritative pose.

"Do n't come a step nearer."

The flash of her eyes enjoins obedience.

"Oh, Guy! weak, fickle Guy," she says, shaking her head reproachfully. "You are forgetting that other woman. Go to her; tell her I fascinate you. Flatter her into believing I am a passing fancy which bewitches you; tell her I 'm a fury with topaz hair and gleaming eyes of adamant, whose glance transfixes you. Tell her that, or anything, and if she loves you she 'll believe it."

"Moira," I cry. "You never loved me as she does. She trusts me. She knows about you, for I told her all. I offered never to see you again, but she sent me to you and told me that if I loved you still I was free. I thought I could be true to her. I am a coward. Pity me, Moira, forgive me."

"Did she tell you to come back to me?"

"Yes."

Her big, mystical eyes grow cold.

She is silent. I wait for her to speak, and as I wait I see in fancy the trustful eyes of the other looking into mine.

Moira takes my hat and coat from a chair and comes toward me.

"Guy," she says, "you 're going now."

"Why?" I ask, hoarsely.

"Because I wish it."

I hesitate.

"Because I command it."

She holds my coat. Slowly I place my arms in the sleeves and draw it over my shoulders. I am partly conscious of the deep-toned ticking of a clock. I take my hat from her hand and sullenly walk to the door, She follows. On the threshold I turn to bid her good-night. For a moment I stand there unable to speak. Our glances meet. She throws her arms about my neck and kisses me, then tosses her head back. Her fathomless eyes own me again.

"Guy, to-morrow you may come, but

it must be for always; there must be no other woman."

"Now!" I cry.

She pushes me back. The door closes. The lock clicks.

II.

"There is a Frenchman his companion."
Cymbeline.

D'ARGENTEUIL is waiting in the studio. As I enter, I see his little eyes sparkle behind the pages of a paper-covered book. His stubbly hair, cut close behind and showing the scar of a sabre slash, rises above his ochre tinted forehead in a bushy tuft like the crest of a penguin. The book drops into his lap disclosing a Valois beard, cropped like a blackthorn hedge. His face is not of to-day. It needs a pointed doublet and plumed cap, long hose and doeskin boots. As he glances up I fancy I see the gleam of those eyes in a charge at Moncontour, or their soft glances at some fair Gabrielle d'Estrées. His ancestor fell fighting for the League. In

d'Argenteuil's veins flows the blood of the Montmorency.

"Who let you in?" I ask.

"My dear Guy!" The points of d'Argenteuil's moustache vibrate grotesquely as he speaks. Long as I have known him this always amuses me. "My dear Guy! The concierge; how you call him the janiteur. Ez it not so? He leive me in."

"Well, now you're here you may stop on one condition: Don't practice English on me. Keep that for—"

"For the beasts you call servants in your country. Where do you keep your cigarettes?" He asks in his Parisian vernacular.

He knows I keep them in an old Grès de Flandres mug, almost at his elbow, but he has a way of asking for everything.

"You don't seem glad to see me;" he continues, striking a match and holding it so that his thin features grow

Mephistophelian in the glare of the flames. I should like to paint him in that rôle. "You do n't seem glad to see me, and yet I have been waiting ever since the opera. Though I confess I did not expect to find you."

"Then why did you come?" I say as I drop between the bulging arms of my favorite chair.

"To get as far away from Chicago as I can. Fourteen stories nearer paradise."

"Can you reach that pipe there?" I ask. "Not the meerschaum; the little briar with the straight stem. Thanks. There 's tobacco in that powder flask. Hand it me, won't you? And a match too. So the janitor let you in?" I continue, as the first whiff of a sublime mixture, the secret of which I owe to an old Indian officer, rushes through my pipe stem.

"Yes, I have been lost for two hours between these yellow covers. I quite

forgot I was in your fourteenth story paradox."

"Why that?"

"Because perched at the very top of this altar of utility I find one artistic nook; one breathing spot, where I can inhale the pure air of art and purge my nostrils of the fetid atmosphere one breathes in this tumult you call Chicago. Is it not a paradox?"

I nod in acquiescence.

"It is absurd, my dear fellow, I do n't understand it at all;" he says. "To-night it is quiet enough, but in the daytime I come to the door in one of those clanging, jerking cable cars; I jump off because the pig of a conductor won't stop for me; I splash mud all over my boots; I stumble over a heap of garbage; I slip on a banana skin; I am jostled by a throng of embryo millionaires; I rush into a vestibule where glistening tiles and gilded arabesques are jumbled into one glaring apotheosis

of bad taste, and after being jammed into an iron cage where my toes are trodden upon and my nose inflicted with a dozen human smells, I am shot up into space, and landed opposite the door of this art-haven. It is absurd; it is irrational."

"It is neither, it is Chicago. A prejudiced Parisian like yourself whose ideas are bounded by the grass-covered fortifications of Paris, can't understand this vigorous city. Art and commerce can struggle side by side, Raymond."

"Bah! What do these savages know about art?"

D'Argenteuil talks to me that way because I am an artist, because he knew me in Paris. When he was naval attaché in London he talked much the same way about the English. Brutes, boors, *canaille;* that was what they were. Now he is one of the French commission to the Exposition, and for a year he has been eating the dinners of

Chicagoans and laughing at them. He amuses me, but sometimes he make me lose my temper."

"I think you have said enough," I say. "You forget I was born here."

Apparently unmindful of the snub he gazes about the studio admiringly.

"I like your foothold anyway. If you want to instill an appreciation for art into the shrivelled souls of your compatriots, you would better bring them up here, one at a time, and feast their eyes on the delights of this room."

"I'm glad you appreciate something besides yourself and Paris."

"Myself, Guy? I loath myself."

"You conceal the antipathy admirably," I suggest.

I wish he would go. He usually amuses me; to-night he bores me.

"I am the victim of heredity, Guy."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I was born an artist, heredity makes me a sailor."

"Why not combine the two like Pierre Loti?"

"Too late, too late," he sighs.

"If you were born an artist, what has heredity to do with your love for the sea?"

"Love for the sea! I hate it."

I laugh, I can't help it. "You have the Legion of Honor and a Tonquin medal," I suggest. "You seem to do pretty well in a profession you loathe."

"Pride, Guy. Again it is heredity. By the way, I wish you'd get some other cigarettes. I shall send you some hand-made French Caporals just for myself when I visit you.

"Send me anything you like, but tell me why you are a sailor if you loath the sea?"

He swells his chest proudly. "My great-grandfather was an admiral," he says.

"What the devil has that to do with it?"

"In our family the eldest son has always been in the service of his country. Unless killed, he retires at forty. I have three years more of this loathsome life, then I will resign, go to Paris, wear smart clothes, put a flower in my button-hole, drive in the Bois, marry; put Marquis de Bigny on my card; in short be a gentleman *bien vu*."

"So you hide your nobility under a democratic bushel because you are in the service of the Republic?"

"I am only a *lieutenant de vaisseau;* were I an admiral or even a captain it would be different. My great-grandfather was an admiral."

"But your father was a soldier."

"Exactly. That 's why I am a sailor. It was my turn. Great-grandfather a sailor, grandfather in the cavalry, father in the infantry, hence Raymond d'Argenteuil spends twenty years of his life in a service he detests."

"Noblesse oblige."

He does not answer. There is a sketch over in the corner which evidently interests him, for he gets up and walks across the room. It is a woman's head in profile; the remnant of a fancy which once flitted through my life, leaving no more durable impression than a few strokes of my brush upon a bit of canvas. I might have had her love had I cared for it. How different other impressions have been.

The smoke gurgles through my pipe stem. As I blow clouds up towards the ceiling and watch the blue, wavy streaks, the thought comes to me that a woman's influence is a variable physical force. There must be laws governing passion, as there are laws of magnetism. A half hour since, when Moira's face was thrillingly near mine, she was irresistible. Now she seems like a vague danger which threatens me. Were I to frame a law as mathematicians do, I would say that love is a force acting in

inverse ratio to the proximity of the attracting power. After every attraction there is an equal and contrary repulsion. The energy progresses geometrically. The impulse is imparted by induction—by chance is n't it? So much for being a philosopher—so much for being a fool.

"I say, Raymond, why do you look at me like that?"

"I just paid your art a compliment, Guy; you did n't hear me; you 're in love."

"Well?"

"Get over it."

"Can one paint over a passion as one does a bad picture; can one trace a new affection on an old blurred heart?"

He paces the floor with his hands plunged in the pockets of his baggy flannel trousers. There is more generosity than smartness in the cut of that blue serge coat, and the ends of his crimson tie fall in careless bounteous

folds from under the corners of his broad Byron-like collar. How atrociously d'Argenteuil dresses. He doesn't even consider us Chicagoans worthy of evening clothes. To dress badly seems a passion with him. He makes but one exception. He is too proud of his little patrician feet to encase them in anything but the daintiest of patent leather boots. Stopping before a portrait I am painting, he casts his eye over the canvas critically.

"Not bad, not bad," he mutters. "A dumpy bourgeoise idealized, a pug-faced parvenue made tolerable and the likeness retained. Miss McSweeney will stick her little nose up higher than ever and papa McSweeney ought to shower you with dollars."

"I wish you would answer my question."

"A thousand pardons. You were talking about love, and you want my opinion. Well, I give it cheerfully. The

nativity of passion is the birth of imbecility. Be in love if you like, my dear Guy. Be in love with your art, but with a woman—La! La! what stupidity!"

"Is not the intention of all art to give pleasure? Cannot love become an art?"

He stops and glares at me. Then a glance of pity fills his eyes.

"Cherbuliez says a work of art is the production of a fool and a sage. Love, is the work of a fool and the devil."

Cynical d'Argenteuil! how he likes to ramble on like that, tumbling down glittering idols, piercing fond sentiments with his shafts, and all the time, he is as impulsive as a girl of sixteen, as easily led by a glance as a boy of twenty. Have I not seen him worship at the shrine of more than one fair Saxon goddess when he was an attaché in London? Only last week he was pouring forth rapturous Gallic hyper-

bole about the charms of a little fawn-eyed witch who sells chewing gum in the Manufactures Building.

"Raymond!"

"Yes."

"You say that in three years you intend to marry; will you be foolish enough to marry without love?"

"Certainly not. Love is a habit like smoking or absinthe. We try it out of curiosity, and it becomes fixed upon us. We know we are better without it, but we go on letting the insidious poison destroy our nerves and our happiness. I acquired the love habit early in life; when I marry I shall keep it up, merely changing the dose."

"How so?"

He laughs cynically. "Why a bachelor loves his friend's wife; a married man loves his wife's friend."

"Such love is devilish."

"Devilish nice, my dear, as you ought to know. By the way, your old

friend, Moira Marston, smiled at me, to-night. Fine woman that! Have you quarreled?"

"No, we never quarrel."

"Yet you have known her for two years to my certain knowledge."

"Longer than that. I knew her when she was a 'co-ed.'"

"'Co-ed,' what is that, a coryphée?"

"No, worse than that; it is a female student in a university. The name is an abbreviation from co-education."

"What an absurd people you Americans are. No wonder the girls talk like men; but Moira Marston is pretty, whatever she is, and that is sufficient. I wish you had quarreled; I would like to step into your shoes."

"Judging by your sentiments, the matter of a quarrel should not stand in your way."

He glances at me reproachfully. "My dear Guy, you misjudge me.

There is one relationship a man of honor always respects."

"I 'm in no mood for your railleries, Raymond, you would better go to bed."

Regardless of my hint he walks about the studio humming a café chantant air; then he betrays an unusual interest in the ceiling. There is a skylight over head covered by a valarium of oriental silk, woven in an intricate pattern. A Persian warrior worked into the stuff, he examines minutely; then he walks to a wall cabinet where I keep a few decanters of cordials. Helping himself to a small glass of cognac, he turns toward me.

"Your health, Guy, and do n't be so foolish as to let a little red haired actress disturb your peace of mind. Love her if you like, but make a pleasure of your love. Let it be exhilarating like a morning ride in the park. Let it be a pastime, not a purpose."

"Get out of here, you bore me."

He drains his glass and puts it down. "As you wish, my dear Guy, sorry you 're out of sorts;" he says with a shrug of the shoulders. "You will be in a better mood to-morrow. Breakfast with me at Old Vienna."

"I will think about it. Do n't wait for me after twelve."

Those piercing black eyes glance at me inquisitively. "Forget about her, Guy. Love is a chimera with the head of a siren, the belly of a cormorant, and the tail of a sting-a-ree. He lures, he devours, and as he dives back into the depths of delusion he swishes his tail and gives the heart a sting which seldom heals. Now, I 'm going."

We walk together towards the door.

"Good night, Guy. To-morrow at twelve."

"Yes."

He extends his hand.

"Are you put out with me, mon cher?"

"No, we are friends."

"Yes, at least until one of us is married."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Why, a married man has only acquaintances and enemies; the latter class invariably includes his best friend."

Scoffing d'Argenteuil! I can hear his cynical chuckle echo through the hall, as his nervous step clacks on the tile floor.

III.

"As due to love as thoughts and dreams."
Mid-Summer Night's Dream.

MY nurse once lured me into the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. I shall never forget my childish terror. The waxen images of criminals, the bloated faces and bloody necks, the mournful eyes of Charlotte Corday peering through her prison bars; to me they were real.

One's thoughts are sometimes a chamber of horrors.

Damn it all !—the past is over.

"To-morrow you may come, but it must be for always; there must be no other woman."

How those words follow me. I thought that passion dead. It was only slumbering. A glance awoke it, and

the pressure of two lips sent it bounding through me with the strength of a maniac who had burst his chains.

Moira! Moira! why did you come back into my life to torture me?

It is cold here; is the window open? No, it must have been the fear of tomorrow.

The night seems impenetrable—the earth far away. That double row of twinkling lights converging into nothingness; they are like as many lives. They flare up, burn, and are extinguished. We all sputter for a time, then go out. I hate to look at the black, infinite sky—but a slice of the universe, is n't it? It makes me realize I am nothing but an atom. That train flying along there by the lake, with the lights flickering in the car windows—mysterious, phantom-like, it looks in the darkness, yet it is only a few cells of atoms. A broken rail, a misplaced switch may resolve the living freight into—into

what? I never look down from a great height like this without being tempted to penetrate the awful mystery. One plunge through space would solve it. Would it hurt, I wonder; or would one lose consciousness before the crash?

My pipe is out. So much for impotent speculation. Where did d'Argenteuil put that powder flask? Oh, there it is on the ledge of that table. I remember now, I had it in my hand. Altogether too absent minded, old man. You 'll be forgetting your name next.

It's curious how soothing a pipe is. Cigarettes irritate, cigars mollify, but a pipe consoles. Confound that match. That 's the second that would n't go.

Moira's picture. I thought I locked it up, but here it is on the ledge of this cabinet.

And the other.

Am I forgetting her, or do I crowd her from my mind because I am afraid to meet her even in my thoughts? I will open the cabinet and look at her picture.

Reproachful eyes, are n't they? Wherever I turn they follow me. You have a right to reproach me Dorothy, but you should not have sent me to the other. It were better to let her pass out of my life. I was honest with you; I told you the truth. I loved her. It was a frenzied love, but it was inadequate. You brought peace to me — inspiration even — for you made me work as I never worked before; but did you bring everything? Answer me! You do not speak. Does doubt fill your mind too? How gracefully you sit in that low-backed chair; how erect. There is a purpose in every line of your face. You are sublime. I love you — my soul loves you. The devil owns my

body — that devil with insinuating eyes and glistening reddish hair.

Moira Marston — Dorothy Temple, I will put you side by side upon the table. Now let me sit and look at you.

You were side by side when I first saw you, leaning on the steamer's rail, looking at the water, dreaming no doubt, for you did not speak. Perhaps your dreams were nightmares. Trigonometrical nightmares with the hideous shapes of co-sines and tangents dancing before your frightened freshman eyes. You both seemed paradoxical when viewed in the light of "co-eds" for you were both good looking. I remember leaning back in my deck chair and studying you. My artist's eye, though undeveloped then, appreciated that picture. The white decked steamer with her grinding paddles throbbing monotonously, a hazy atmosphere, a stretch

of wooded shore near by, with the broken shadows of the trees reflected in the water, and beyond all a line of bluish hills crowned by the familiar buildings of Alma Mater, with their greyish outlines, faintly etched against the sky.

But that was only a background, a setting. I opened my sketch book and began to draw them. One looked up for a moment, then turned away. Glancing round again she smiled, and I tried in vain to catch her saucy expression. The other gazed thoughtfully at the lake.

Curious, was n't it, that they should have been friends in those days ? Their characters were as different then as now.

I wonder if Moira remembers that incident in the geometry examination.

I can see it now ; see it clearer than if the scene were painted on that canvas yonder.

It is a dingy room with rising tiers of seats. Two hundred excited faces scan the scrawling on as many sheets of foolscap. Crabbed proctors pace the floor eyeing the terrified freshmen. Their steps echo through the cheerless hall. No other sound but the occasional rustle of a paper, the measured grating of pencils. The windows are open and the sultry September air fans the heated faces. Occasionally a sigh escapes parched lips as anxious eyes vainly study angles. The pencils scribble monotonously.

A privileged senior, I quietly scan the faces of that incoming class.

In the front row of seats among the score or so which co-education has attracted to those halls, are Moira and Dorothy side by side again. One writes deliberately, the other scrawls carelessly, then gazes round, then stops to sharpen a pencil point. I wish I could forget it, but Moira stealthily draws a little scroll of paper from her sleeve; she

glances up and catches my eye, blushes and scribbles excitedly a moment, then slyly her eyes rise to mine and do not turn away. A daring, almost impudent smile, trembles on her little mouth, but her eyes grow soft and plead.

Why did I wince beneath that glance? Why did my cheeks glow? Why did I not turn to the other? She bends over her paper and writes confidently; she does not pause to glance up and smile; she does not cheat—cruel, but true word. No, her delicate face is sincere, her dark eyes set wide apart, with arching brows and curling lashes, are honest. But I did not stop to analyse that face then. I paced the floor nervously, then turned to look at Moira. She knew it, though she pretended to write.

Ah beauty! what are you to so disturb us? We fancy we meet you ready made, but are you not created before

us, or in us? Are you not an act rather than an actuality? You are as illusive as happiness, as mysterious as chance; you are not a type, for you are an exception; comparative too, for to the next observer you may be hideous. After all you are nothing but a lie which dazzles, which insinuates. In the dark you are but a reminiscence.

If I were not too lazy I would write that down, and then find that I had read most of it somewhere, or that it was not worth reading.

But Moira's subtle beauty, whatever it be, crept into my heart. It infused itself like a poison. That night, after the examination, I felt it biting. The boisterous songs at Metzger's could not deaden it.

Careless hours, those spent there. I can see the old place now—that narrow dingy room with German prints upon the walls. The marble topped tables

hacked by successive classes are placed end to end; the animated faces of my chums are girdled round them. Tumultuous laughter fills the room. The air is dense with smoke. In the doorway Metzger appears, his fat, red face beaming with smiles, his plump dimpled arms bared to the elbow; his apron spotless white. He bears a ponderous crystal "Rubicon" foaming with translucent Pilsener, and amid cheers and jokes from lip to lip the frothy cup is passed. The last man drains it, slams it bottom upwards on the table. "The Rubicon is crossed." More beer, Metzger. A song! a song! Then sixty lusty throats swell forth in chorus. Glorious hours;—wasted perhaps,—but who regrets them?

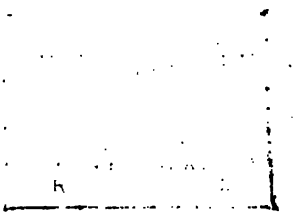
When I look at this photograph of Moira those college days seem incomprehensible. Effective costume, is n't it?

I shall never forget the first night she wore it; the applause, her five recalls;

yes, she came on just as she is there, with a dandified strut, and a swagger, a quizzing glass in one hand, and in the other a slender staff tied round with a bow of satin ribbon. And her entrance song with its quaint refrain. But Moira made the song; her personality; the dashing way she sang it. How proud I felt. But it is hard to reconcile it all with the Moira of eight years ago.

Yet that sly, laughing face, almost smothered by the fluffy curls of the wig, peeping impudently over the broad neckcloth is surely the same face that sent me covert glances in the examination room. That easy pose, that stunning long tailed coat with the high rolling collar and ruffled cuffs, that cocked hat pushed jauntily sidewise, those little feet tipped into dainty buckled slippers with high French heels; it is all studied effective, fascinating, but is it not Moira through and through.

Yes, the same Moira of those college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days. The same Moira whom I met with Dorothy that night when old bilious-eyed Professor Simpkins invited us to tea. I shall never forget the glances she sent me when the professor offered up thanks for the chipped beef and the wafer-like slices of bread with a tinge of butter here and there; they nearly lost me my degree. How bored we were and how hungry; but Dorothy, the sweet girl, pretended to be interested in old Simpkin's stories.

The thought of that tea makes me hungry. Curious effect the imagination has on the appetite. I believe I will make a sandwhich.

I wonder where I put those sardines? Ah, there they are, and the can opener too. That's luck.

I'll take this stuff over to the table and have a "spread," as we used to say in college.

By Jove, that cork comes hard.

At all events this is a slight improvement on Simpkins' feast—fast is the better word—and that reminds me of the supper I had with Moira and Dorothy at Jameson's after we escaped from the old boy's starvation party.

I am sure nothing but pity for those famished girls—or was it a pair of eyes? —made me defy college opinion and take two "co-eds" to Jameson's.

Luckily we had the place to ourselves.

Poor, hectic Jameson, I can see his lean fingers picking caramels from the long glass showcase; I can hear his hacking, consumptive cough. But the gloom of his moribund presence did not penetrate beyond the starched lace curtains and dingy green lambrequins which separated his candy shop from the "oyster parlor."

Yes, we were hungry that night. The sin of gluttony be on your head, Simp-

kins, for we all repeated our orders. But we became acquainted, and that was a blessing—or a curse.

Moira and Dorothy talked about themselves—or rather Dorothy talked and Moira smiled and I looked, but did not listen much. But I heard enough to learn that they were both Chicago girls, and that was something. Moira's father was not unknown to me, at least I had drunk his Eureka beer, and passed his big green stone house in Michigan Avenue; but I thought that Bracker was an impossible name for such a girl as Moira. No wonder she took Marston for a stage name.

Dorothy talked a great deal in her quiet way. It was easy to see that she came to college to study—and Moira to get away from home.

But I paid little attention to Dorothy's earnest views of life, I tried to listen, but my eyes were drawn elsewhere.

Yes, Moira, girl though you were, you owned me, even then. Do you remember that short-cut to the town through that old cemetery—the "boneyard" we fellows called it? Do you remember that wintry day, too? The winding, icy path glistens in the sunlight; the wind whirs through the naked trees, and a snowy counterpane, rumpled by graves, tented here and there by grim headstones, spreads over the rolling earth to the frozen lake.

Down the path you rush, slipping, sliding; your laughter peals clear on the frosty air.

You 'll fall, I wager you do. There you go. No, lucky escape. That 's right. Throw your arms round that granite shaft for support, you 're exhausted.

"I hate tombs, Guy!" you exclaim between your gasps. "I hate death and dead people. Why did you bring me

here? Let 's sing, Guy ; let 's wake up these dry bones."

A rollicking song swells from your lips ; over the snow-covered ground you dance recklessly, dance until you stagger from dizziness. I would not be a man did I not hold you in my arms and kiss your glowing cheeks.

I see the glint of teeth between your lips."

"Do n't, Guy, do n't."

You struggle and push me back and laugh. Then you fly on down the path, and I rush after you.

"Guy," you cry, panting at the bottom; "I hate life here. I am stifled in these gloomy lecture rooms. I 'm getting desperate. I want to be free. I shall do something reckless soon. Let 's elope, Guy ; I 'll support you; I 'll be a circus queen or a ballet girl. Will you come?"

"Yes,—anywhere."

Thoughtless, reckless girl. She had not learned then the dissimulation she practices now as a fine art. No, I am sure it was merely a heedless impulse which induced her to put on men's clothes and take another madcap girl to the minstrel show at Argus Hall. No wonder it got to the faculty. I suppose she thought she could disguise herself, but all the students recognized her immediately. Even the end-men saw what was up and cracked jokes about it, while Moira sat there and tried to brazen it out.

How quickly the faculty hurried them both out of town, and tried to hush the matter up, but of course it got into the papers with all the names and exaggerated details.

As I think of that escapade now, I can sympathize with Moira for refusing to go home in disgrace. It was easy for a pretty girl to get on the stage, especially when she had natural talent,

and had created so much newspaper talk; but I was keenly mortified at the time.

Yet there is no use worrying over bygones. She passed out of my life then.

I am tired of that portrait of Miss McSweeney. I shall send it home tomorrow. Curious d'Argenteuil should have liked it. He seldom likes anything except his own cynical epigrams and scoffs. But the picture has some merit. I can see it myself. If I were not so infernally lazy I might do something really creditable again. I am at a standstill in my work. I ought to go on developing. A man has no excuse for living on the reputation of a few medals.

I wonder why I am myself, anyway? This I is loathsome. Why can't I throw myself out of myself? My personality is one network of blemishes,

and I made them. I hacked and scratched, but when I try to erase I find the marks as ineffaceable as the flaws in an emerald. No wonder impersonality is the Buddhist's ideal, yet the surest argument against Nirvana is the slavery in which self binds us. Is it not after all the slavery of a lover to his mistress; to an inexorable mistress who plagues and tantalizes, but who is loved because her actions are uncontrollable, her nature fathomless.

Guy Wharton, you are an artist—proof sufficient that you are not a philosopher. So there's an end to speculation.

I might find consolation in another pipe. Well, here goes.

Moira, you tempter, keep out of my thoughts.

Where are you, Dorothy? You seem but a shimmer, faint and undefined.

There you are. Take form and let us wander through the gorge which flanks the college; let us scramble down the scraggy fern-girt path, over the rustic foot-bridge, past the glistening waterfall to that nook where the stream flows deep and the willows trail in the water.

Now, you lean against a tree and dabble your hand in a pool; the sunlight streaming through the leaves forms weird shadows on your face. The cascade rumbles, the eddies gleam. No, Dorothy, I did not love you then. Perhaps that is why the memory of that day is indistinct. The grandeur of a nature such as yours dawns slowly.

We were friends then because you had been Moira's friend. I listened eagerly because you talked of her.

"Her life is ruined," you said. "But who was responsible? Impetuous Moira whose heart has as many notes as an organ, or her parents who played nothing but discords?"

"And what of her future?" I asked.

"You men will pay the penalty of her parents' blindness.

"How so?"

"She will be a dangerous woman."

"Unless she meets the right man."

"Who must laugh when she laughs, sympathize when she cries, and smile when she pouts."

I did not answer. Picking up a stone I shied it over the water, then watched it skip from eddy to eddy.

"I suppose some day she will meet that man," I said finally.

"She is far more likely to meet a fool and make him miserable."

"You are bitter."

"No, but you men usually love the women you cannot respect, and respect the women you cannot love. You paint your ideal in neutral tints. She is a coddled, silly creature in whom ignorance is disguised as purity, and when you meet her of course you cannot love her.

The true woman you pass unnoticed because she is simply herself, and in the end you are made miserable by unconscionable flesh and blood."

"You seem unduly wise for a girl," I said, impatiently. "But is not your ideal man neutral tinted also?"

"I suppose so, as he is unlike any man I have ever known. But that really matters little, as I never expect to meet him."

"Yet men will love you."

"Oh, dear, no; I am not the sort of girl men fall in love with; I am too serious."

"That is because you take life too seriously. You expect too much of love."

"Yes, I expect far more than most men can give a woman." Then she turned her head away thoughtfully.

"You are young, Guy, do n't be like other men, then some day you may realize how grandly a woman can love the man she respects."

Curious conversation, was it not? It was the last we had together before I left old Alma Mater and went to Paris to study under Viraut. I was young then and thought it manly to lead a man's life. I am like the rest now, bad and irredeemable, I suppose.

And yet you love me, Dorothy, though you must despise me. Could your love redeem me?

I doubt it.

Love! What is it?

A flame, they say. A capricious flame one kindles to warm a shivering heart. Anxiously the first sparks are nursed, carefully the little blaze is fanned in anticipation of warmth and comfort; but a gust of ennui extinguishes those fitful sparks, or a passionate gale rouses them into a mighty conflagration which consumes the heart. How few ever kindle a cosy hearth fire!

Bah! That sounds like d'Argenteuil.

How he likes to play the rôle of volunteer fireman! From a mind charged with caustic cynicism he turns hot streams of epigram upon the blazing hearts of his friends.

Where is that book he had when I came in? Perhaps reading would make me sleepy.

Oh, there it is, with "A Rebours" printed across its yellow cover. Appropriate title. The author himself takes life the wrong way. Appropriate book for d'Argenteuil to read, too. It ought to give him the horrors. This character, Des Esseintes is so like himself, or like what he will be when one day he tries in vain to re-ignite the passions which have ceased to sizzle and fume in that burnt clay retort which serves him for a heart.

Yes, d'Argenteuil is a typical decadent. He suffers from the *maladie fin de siècle.*

But this "A Rebours" of Huysman's

is a fascinating book, fascinating because of its hectic tones, its mental debauches, its weird harmonies of passion. It is a camera obscura of the senses, from which the light of day is excluded, where the ravings of a diseased brain flit before one in fantastic forms and everything is, as the title suggests, upside down.

Yes; this book expresses an epoch, a decaying epoch; but I wonder if it really typifies this closing century. Are we dry-rotting because the gardeners of the age have forced the growth of our intellects and exhausted our mental sap? Is the glorious bloom of the nineteenth century to be followed by withering leaves and decaying branches?

If so, it is only history repeating itself. Take this description of a book in des Esseintes' heteroclitic library: "The Satyricon of Petronius," a story of the declining period of Roman glory; "unrolling the minute existence of the people, their actions, their bestialities."

"In the pages of that book Roman society tramps through luxurious villas, insolent with splendour, delirious with riches; it slinks through pauper tenements with rumpled flea-infested beds of sacking. Rascally, plunder searching sharpers, old paint-smeared hags with plastered cheeks and tucked up skirts, plump frizzled wenches of sixteen years; hysterical women and fortune hunting parents who pander their offspring to the orgie loving rich; all these file through those pages, quarrelling in the streets, rubbing shoulders in the baths, and pummelling one another as in a pantomime."

That was Rome, but might it not be glittering, seething Paris, city of boudoirs and barricades?

Yes. But where are the hordes of flat-nosed barbarians, with gashed cheeks and hairy saffron faces, who sit astride their wiry ponies, wrapped in rat skin cloaks, waiting by the

Danube's banks for the moment to sweep down and crush out our puny civilization? Perhaps they are among us now. Wild eyed savages with unkempt hair and greasy coats, slouched hats and frowzy beards—untamed beasts in human guise, with bombs and gleaming daggers hidden beneath their cloaks, who skulk through the by-ways of civilization, biding the hour of annihilation.

In the meantime I must sleep and eat, and die perhaps, so I might as well read on. Yet I hate to read this book. Too much of my own life is recalled, too much of those student days in Paris, when love was a matter of a moment, or an hour. Moira did not own me then, but was I any the better? I was leading a manly life I thought, and paying the penalty too.

This picture for instance:

"Through partly opened doors and windows badly screened by panes of

ored glass or flimsy sash curtains he
ıembered catching glimpses of wo-
n waddling like geese, with out-
:tched necks, or slumped on benches
sing, humming, with their elbows on
marble tables, and their cheeks be-
:en their hands. Some prinked be-
ɜ the mirrors and fingered their friz-
ł false hair, while others drawing
ıdfuls of silver and copper pieces
m weak springed reticules, ranged
m methodically in little piles. Most
them had massive features, rasping
ces, soft necks and pencilled eyes,
l all seemed like wax figures, wound
at the same time by the same key, to
nch the same solicitations in similar
es, to detail the same whimsical
ıll talk and droll reflections."

t was in such a place I met Lioba.
wonder if it was her fresh, young
ɜ, so different from the rest, which
acted me; or was it those flashing
scovite eyes which glowed like burn-

ing coals one moment, and the next threw glances full of tenderness?

I can see her sitting opposite me at a little marble table, stirring the cherry colored sirup in her glass, her crimped yellow hair falling from under a huge hat, resplendent with barbaric colors, her black, curling eyelashes drooping sadly for the moment.

Lioba, you panther, stop purring. Toss back your head. Let me see your eyes gleam.

Curious! these memories of the past which come to me to-night. Lioba has not entered my thoughts for months—years perhaps, yet she played her quick, active part in those student days in Paris. She overwhelmed me like a fierce blast from her native steppes, but she left me as suddenly as she came; left me for the Champs Elysées quarter and a victoria.

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Back, Lioba, out of my thoughts. You were only a passing fancy.

But a vivid fancy to-night. Now we glide over the polished floor of the Bal-Gerard. Round and round we whirl. Sensuous strains roll from the Tzigan cymballos—the lights glare confusedly —the air is dense with smoke. Shouts! laughter! echo through the room. On, on we dance, your glowing cheeks next mine, until we sink exhausted.

Ugh! The next morning I had a splitting headache. I painted in a listless, dazed way, and Viraut lost his temper.

Dear old Viraut! Many a time you have found fault with my bad work, but I love you in spite of everything. Yes, I owe you for my slight success, for the little art I have. That "Birth of Spring" you made me paint without suggestions —a laughing nymph peeping through

the apple blossoms as the snows of winter melt away—it was refused at the Salon. You made me paint it again, half its former size, and with less detail. It was accepted and skied. You patted me on the back and called it good. That fancy of the following year: The slight nude figure of a girl with black stockings, black gloves, and a black mask before the eyes; it hung on the line and attracted the crowd; but you frowned and called it bad. It was merely a trick to gain notoriety, you said; but when I finally won my third-class medal by a piece of earnest, careful work, I believe you were more pleased than I.

Yes, Viraut, you told me to keep right on putting my soul into my work, with art for my mistress. I fear art has been only my pastime since then, my solace for a troubled heart. My work shows it.

I wish I were back again; a student in the atelier.

I wish I could ring at the huge
:ather-worn door and wait until I hear
e click of the bolt as it is jerked back
' a wire from the concierge's room.
he door swings partly open, a cold
ast rushes through the stone archway
ading to the courtyard, bearing with
an odor of frying grease and garlic.
ompletely filling her little doorway
inds Madame Michelet, her keen black
es almost hidden by rolls of ruddy
sh, long straggling hairs growing in
itches on her quadrupled chin. An
iron string drawn tight about her
arse blue gown gives her bulging form
e appearance of a meal sack. "Bon
ur M'sieur Wharton," she gurgles in
ping tones, then she turns to her lit-
stove, where an iron stew pan is
aming. Through the cold, vaulted
sage my steps resound, and then I
mp across the cobble stones of the
irtyard, where the sunlight glistens
the water of an old stone fountain—

a moss grown scollop-shell suppor
by two smudge faced cupids with th
noses hacked away. A rusty iron p
ing and a patch of vivid grass surrou
the basin; grimy white-washed w
with mansard roofs frown down u
me.

Across the courtyard is the low do
way, where a well worn stairway le
upward to the atelier. A blue-blou
ouvrier shuffles past me humming
air of the people; scarlet geraniu
bloom upon the window ledge of Pi
Noir's little paint shop, and throug
neighboring window is echoed
measured clicking of a tombstone scu
tor's chisel. Now my steps creak
slowly mount those dingy stairs
smoky walls with coarse caricatu
daubed on the plaster. An uproar
laughter, shouts, cat calls, swells fr
the atelier above, and then for devi
I imitate dear old Viraut's step.
fellows hear me; sudden silence rei

I reach the landing of the second floor, where some would be wag has scrawled on both doors the words, "Open the other door," then stealthily I enter and hang my coat behind the screen in Viraut's favorite place. I grunt and cough, and laugh to myself, as I listen to the measured grating of the crayons. But alas, a curly headed little Marseillese discovers the fraud, and then what a chorus of shouts and hisses, what a volley of bread, charcoal, chalk and everything "throwable." What does it matter? I am there among my companions, the friends whom I love—and hate, some of them, for there are all kinds.

But those are only memories.

I cannot wish myself back again.

Is my imagination keener than most, I wonder? Perhaps an artistic temperament is over-sensitive, and that is why memories, fancies, regrets hurtle through my brain, surging, clashing, tormenting, when I want to sleep. Yes, I worry too

much. I analyze too much; but I suppose I shall continue this minute dissection of my feelings until only a grinning skeleton remains to terrify me.

Hallo! That was something like a yawn. I think I 'll turn in.

One never can find a match. Where are they, anyway? Idiot! You forgot the electric light. Oh, well, I never shall grow used to this new-fangled existence. I am regulated entirely by an electric key board. I fairly pine for a tallow dip and a pair of rickety stairs to climb.

How life here has changed since I was a boy.

I suppose one living here continuously would not notice it so much, but coming back as I do after years of absence, nothing seems in its place. Everything has expanded out and grown upward. The city has shaken off its

nple chrysalis, it has pierced the ›uds with its lanky, towering tentacles, d spread forth its suburb-mottled ngs. But grimy Chicago is scarcely ›utterfly; it is more like a seething t-hill.

Why invent stupid metaphors and ıiles?

I left a Chicago of wooden sidewalks d picket fences, I find a Chicago of ›ble stones and cable cars. In the ıce of lapping boards and green nds are granite and brick; instead of kling bells on sleepy car horses, isy, clanging gongs. Quiet has given ıce to uproar; simplicity to magni-le.

There! I hope the thud of those ›es will wake up that real estate man the floor below.

Lean, sallow-faced shark, how many lows has he robbed, how many streets

has he disfigured with sign boards? I hate his vulgar personality. When I meet him swaggering in the street with hat on one side, I am tempted to knock the long cigar out of his thin lips.

Where did that slavey put my pajamas? Oh, there they are on the lounge. She'll be putting them on the shelf next.

By Jove, I'm tired. How good this bed feels. I wish I felt sleepy.

Moira, I won't think about you. I want to sleep. "To-morrow you may come back." I won't go back.

Rub a dub, rub a dub dub! Keep it up you infernal steam-pipe.

How shall I pose Mrs. Driscoll? Of course she wants to show her neck. It's her only good point. Why do plain women have their portraits painted? Because they want to be flattered into believing they look like their portraits. Fancy painting a woman as plain as she is. One would never get another order.

Confound that steam pipe, it will drive me mad. Dorothy, you dear, brave girl, I know I am unworthy, but don't look at me so reproachfully. I will come back. I won't see her again. No, I don't love her. She fascinates me. She arouses the worst side of my nature.

I won't breakfast with d'Argenteuil. I don't want to see the Exposition again. I want to keep the memory of that night with Dorothy on the lagoons as the last impression.

By Jove, I forgot to dine at the Morrison's to-day, and I made the appointment. What lie shall I tell her?

Is that fat man overhead walking to reduce his flesh? That's right!—drop your boots on the floor.

Moira, with your fluttering skirts and dazzling eyes, don't do that dance. Muriel, you little witch, don't lie on the lounge and spread out your golden curls. I know you're a good model

and I intend to paint you, but I want to sleep now.

You don't know what lives we men lead, Dorothy; you'd hate me if you did.

Oh, damn it, I can't sleep! I am going to get up and read.

How wide awake I am. I don't believe I shall ever be sleepy again. Where are those slippers? I hope that bath gown is in the closet. Yes, for a wonder, slavey put it in its place.

A whiskey and soda! Brilliant thought.

No drink wears like Scotch, yet I was for years getting acquainted with it. So many years wasted.

Another affinity with d'Argenteuil, we sampled the stuff together, made wry faces, and ended by liking it. The same evening we went by chance to the Frivolity Theatre.

So Scotch whiskey brought me back to Moira.

I wonder which is the more insidious. The one muddles me, the other makes me maudlin. But this Highland stuff is good nevertheless, so here's to Moira's eyes. Eyes which excruciate and intoxicate. Ugly jaw-breaking words. We'll try again. Here 's to Moira: delight of my eyes, torment of my heart, poison of my soul—and to Dorothy, the antidote! That whiskey must be going to my head. I am growing foolish.

Well, if I had n't become chummy with d'Argenteuil in Paris I would not have run over to London to visit him, and if I had not gone to London I could not have gone to the Frivolity that night, and if I had not gone to the Frivolity I would not be suffering from insomnia now. Logical conclusion derived *a priori* from an if.

Yes; that night I took the first sip of the poison. I had been tempted before at college.

We dined together at the "Diplomatic," and wandered out after dinner because the Club seemed hot and stuffy. Sauntering along Piccadilly, we gazed idly at the shop windows until the lights of the Frivolity attracted us. "The Seneschal," a new comic opera was on and we strolled in. It was the first night, and a sign "Stalls Full," was displayed before the door; but d'Argenteuil knew the manager, who gave us two seats he had been holding for some swell.

An act was just over, so we sauntered to the bar. Trim maids with dainty caps and broad white collars were opening soda bottles. Why is it that a barmaid, howsoever slight her waist, howsoever delicate her face, has big red hands? A trade mark, I suppose.

Repellant to me, but not to those sleek youths who leered at the frizzled-haired Hebes behind the bar. They were at that puppy age which thinks it manly to ogle anything in petticoats.

I preferred those portly men of prominence with glossy heads and eye glasses, who stood about in groups discussing the piece. From the discordant din of opinion which welled from their lips, I gathered that the opera was "not bad," and that the American had made a hit. But the buzzing of an electric bell produced a movement in the crowd, and leaving the smoke-filled room we sauntered up a tortuous flight of steps to the theatre.

There diamonds glistened on patrician heads, a hum of modulated voices mingled with the rustle of satins and mellow lights fell softly on blanched shirt fronts or delicate necks; fell too on scrawny shoulders and shrivelled skins,

grey hairs and bald spots; but the full effect was a well-bred, well-dressed harmony.

We stumbled over a few knees to our places.

Up from somewhere came a plump little fellow, bustling with importance. He mounted his throne and raised his sceptre high in air. Thirty dutiful subjects responded to his call. His neck grew red, his arms waved madly, fiddles squeaked, cymbals clashed, my ears throbbed—for I was almost in the midst of those screeching fiends—then the curtain rose and a troop of laughing girls with fluffy curls and striped tights rushed on dragging a loutish clown in their wake.

A comic song and chorus with a quaint droning accompaniment; a rollicking dance with fluttering skirts and stamping feet; then down from the back, where real water gurgled over painted rocks, and grassy, chalet-crested

hillocks rolled away to the snow-capped Alps, a girl came tripping across a rustic bride. Back scurried the chorus—"Margot! Margot!" shouted the girls; hands waved, heads flurried, the fiddles crooned, the drums throbbed, down to the footlights she dashed.

Reddish curls glistened under a jaunty peasant cap, dimpled arms rested akimbo on a slender velvet corselet, wee feet in crimson stockings danced a captivating side step, while the catchy notes of a song flowed from pouting lips and a little head swayed bewitchingly to the music's rhythm.

Through the flare of the footlights I met the glance of her lustrous eyes.

A quick numbing sensation darted through me. My pulses throbbed; wild fancies filled my brain. Anxiously I glanced at the play bill. Part of the name was unfamiliar, but Moira was unchanged.

Curious, the power of a random

glance like that. It conjured memories of a wintry day, a winding icy path; in fancy I felt the soft glow of a cheek on my lips.

The smile of a little red-haired actress. That was all. I may philosophize now, but to-night? I thought the fires of that passion were out. They were only banked. I thought myself strong, but those eyes owned me again to-night.

Fool!

Shall I never be free?

Why not surrender? To struggle seems useless.

After all passion has its sweets even if the dregs are bitter. Perhaps that is the most one can realize from loving. The contentment with which the thought of Dorothy has filled my heart at times seemed the realization of ideal love, but it was momentary also. It was pleasant in a dreamy way, but did it satisfy?

Oh, well, there I sat in the stalls that

night watching each play of that little face. Once our glances met. A look of wonder, then of recognition, it seemed, filled her eyes. Did she remember me? Six years had altered much. Soon the curtain fell. I heard the applause. She bowed before the footlights. It had seemed but a moment.

D'Argenteuil and I wandered into the foyer. I was thinking. He asked me a question, but I did not reply.

"You liked the little American?" he repeated.

"Yes," I mumbled.

"Not bad, not bad. Ah, but Lillian Vance! She has repose, she has chic."

I did not argue. One seldom defends a budding passion, one hides it. One is more apt to hide than defend.

Ledger, the manager, stood in the foyer oozing self-consequence. A jeweler and a florist had marred the gentlemanly veneer of a clever tailor, while a

barber and perfumer had made him positively obnoxious; but d'Argenteuil cultivated this personage for ulterior motives, so I was introduced and added my modicum of compliment on the new piece to the fulsome hyperbole of my friend.

"It is n't the piece, gentlemen," said Ledger. "It 's the company which goes with the public. This piece failed in Paris. The Johnnies over there did n't put it on properly. Now I take it and have the book rewritten with plenty of local gags. My conductor—I pay him thirty quid a week, but he 's worth it—writes three songs, and a ballet for the second act; then I engage the best company money can buy; Charley Willis stages it, and you would n't know it for the same piece. This production cost me £3,000 before the curtain went up, but it 's worth every bob I 've put in. Good for three hundred nights sure. I tell you, gentlemen,

it takes genius to put a piece on properly.

"I compliment you;" said d'Argenteuil. "And ze artistes! Excellent! Vance she make a beautiful success."

"Oh, Vance is well enough, but she'll be out of the running soon. Novelty. That's what the public wants. There's that American, Moira Marston; she'll be the talk of the town to-morrow. That 's where genius comes in. I keep an agent in New York. He wrote me about her. I cabled an offer, accepted, and here I am with a success before these slow going duffers here knew she existed. I lived in the States ten years, and learned how to 'hustle' there."

Then his little twitching eyes beamed, and a triumphant smile crossed his coarse lips.

"I knew her before she went on the stage," I vouchsafed.

"Then you're the man I'm looking for, come with me. I'm going back to

encourage her. She's dreadfully nervous, London appearance means everything in the profession. She'll be glad to see some one she knows. And monsoor too; he's been there before; can't tell him much about London even if he is a Frenchman, Eh, Monsoor!"

D'Argenteuil smiled deprecatingly. He found it an effort to endure Ledger's familiarity.

"Going back on a first night aint according to rules;" said the manager, "but we'll have to make an exception for monsoor. He's got a girl back there. She's getting jealous of Marston, and monsoor may calm her down. Come, on gentlemen, we have n't much time."

Following Ledger we threaded our way through the crowded foyer to a little door back of the proscenium boxes. Stumbling down a few steps we groped through a darkened passage and finally reached the stage.

"Stop here till I find where Marston dresses," said Ledger.

I glanced about me curiously.

Burly stage hands rushed past me dragging great flapping pieces of scenery into place. Fanned by chilly draughts the huge curtain swayed gently to and fro. The dust from a dozen brooms filled my nostrils; scurrying steps, oaths, the pounding of hammers, mingled discordantly. Through gloomy recesses grotesque figures groped weirdly, while the flickering border lights above threw a shadowy glare into dismal lofts, where drops, flies and stage tackle were jumbled in mazelike confusion.

In the centre of the stage a thick set little man was swaggering. He had a brutish cast of countenance; his hands were in his pockets and his hat was sidewise.

"Look alive there 'Arry," he called gruffly to a sweltering workman, who was struggling under the weight of a

tottering wing; "There you bloomin ass, you've tore that sky border."

Tumbling up a rickety flight of steps from the depths below came a troop of girls. They brushed past me, and met my glance with a brazen stare. Bold, defiant faces, most of them had, with blackened eyes and paint daubs on their cheeks, bare necks caked with powder and coarse, curly yellow wigs. They joked, giggled, huddled together, and passed on into the gloom of the wings.

Among them I noticed a face still fresh, despite the make up and gaudy tunic. Those eyes drooped beneath my gaze. I fancied I detected a blush under the paint and powder. Yes—and a year later I met that face again it was like the rest.

"This way," called Ledger at my elbow; "Mind that bunch light."

D'Argenteuil had stolen away. Under the eaves of a canvas house he stood

talking in low tones with a plump, blonde haired girl, in doublet and long hose.

I followed Ledger.

He stopped near the complicated array of handles by which the lights were managed, and rapped at a low battered door.

"Come in;" called a woman's voice.

He entered, and I followed hesitatingly, stopping for a moment on the threshold.

The room was three cornered and small, with white-washed walls and plain carpeted floor. A gas jet guarded by a cage of wire burned brilliantly near the dressing table, where rouge pots and powder puffs, brushes and crimping irons were scattered in confusion. Seated before the mirror was Moira. She was adjusting a huge Gainsborough hat, with bobbing plumes of fluffy ostrich feathers. A trim maid was hanging a dress against the whitened

wall, where multicolored garments were stretched on a row of hooks. Near the door was a huge iron-bound trunk, plastered over with numerous labels.

Moira glanced up.

"Oh Mr. Ledger, I'm so nervous, tell me something encouraging. Is the piece going well?"

"I've news, but I am not going to tell you. It might spoil you."

"Do, please do;" she said excitedly.

"Well, the Prince sent his equerry to inquire about you. Vance is tearing mad."

"Oh, I'm so glad; then it is going."

"Three hundred quid in the house. Two recalls for Miss Marston."

"They were so kind to me weren't they? When they called me out, I wanted to tell them all that I loved them—every one. Where's that pin, Parker? The one with the amber knob."

Thinking I was forgotten, I coughed slightly.

Ledger was standing near Moira. He ested his hand familiarly on her houlder. "I forgot, I have a surprise or you, my dear, an old friend, Mr. —Mr.—"

"Guy Wharton!" Moira exclaimed. 'Of all people, you—where did you ome from? I thought I saw you in he stalls, but I was n't sure."

"Well, you two know the ropes;" aid Ledger. "Three is a crowd, so 'll go back in front. Can you find the way, sir?"

"I'll look after him," said Moira. "I 'm tremendously glad to see you. Do n't mind the muss here, Guy. Sit down—well anywhere; on the trunk there.'

"I was afraid you would not remember me."

I wanted to say something else, but I was in that state of excitement in which the most trivial platitude was all my tongue could master.

Forget you, Guy; how could I? You were my first love."

She laughed. I felt color in my cheek.

"Well," she said; "why don't you say something pretty after that?"

"I can say more than you, and say it truthfully. You are my only love."

"Oh, Guy, you absurd, naughty boy, keep such lies for some girl who will believe them. I've had six years' experience since you knew me."

"Which have made you six times more fascinating."

"Then how dull I must have been when you knew me. But no more nonsense. Come here, out of that dark corner, you are too far away. I want to look at you. Handsome as ever, Guy. You are pretty enough to kiss."

"And willing enough also."

"Cheeky as ever; but tell me about yourself. I have enough foolishness from others. Living in London?"

"No, Paris; I am an artist."

"So am I; but art covers a multitude of sins; what kind?"

"Painter."

"So am I;" she laughed, as she gave a final touch of rouge to her cheek.

"But I idealize nature;" I said, "while nature has idealized you. Your art is superfluous; it is false."

"Like my hair. Don't be silly, Guy."

There was a sharp rap at the door.

"Oh, dear, that's my cue. I've such a lot to talk about. You must come and live in London. You can be my big brother."

"Never that."

"Well, come and see me anyhow. Where's that fan, Parker? Here, Guy, is a rose for you. Good-bye."

For a moment I held her hand. She smiled, then darted away. There was a power in her eyes then which her girlish glance had not.

She was out when I called. For

once a sensible impulse seized me and I went back to Paris. Yes, for ten days I threw my soul into my work and tried to forget a face with its chaplet of glinting curls. The result was a successful picture, but for ten days I was miserable.

I remember the blue-grey eyes of Jeanne, my model, gazing at me as I worked. When she posed for me before I was loquacious and she wondered at my silence.

"You must be in love," she said with candid directness.

"Why?"

"Because you say so little."

"What has that to do with it?"

"When a man is partially in love he talks all the time, when he is completely in love he doesn't talk at all. Silence like yours is serious."

"You seem to know a great deal about love."

"Ah, that is something one learns without going to school."

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'But not without a teacher."

'No."

'Tell me about yours.

'I have had several, one for each
de."

'The first. That is always the most
eresting."

She puckered her little mouth into an
pression of disgust. "The first was a
sant."

'But you loved him?"

'I suppose I thought so then; but he
s poor and I had no *dot*."

'So the engagement was broken."

''Not exactly. You see I had an
nt in Paris who was a dressmaker.
came here to work for her, and
rn a *dot*. That was three years
o, but sewing is very tiresome.
only stayed with her three months."

"And your fiancé?"

"He was a very stupid fellow. Per-
ps he is waiting for me still."

"Why do n't you go back and marry him?"

"Marry a peasant! Never."

"Think of the poor fellow waiting for you all these years. You ought to love him."

"Love a peasant. Ugh! I could not."

"But you will grow old. There will be an end to your beauty."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Why talk of the end? Besides there is always the Seine."

To me Jeanne's philosophy was comfortless. My love was too thoroughly hopeful to find consolation in turbid waters. My work, Paris, my friends, became positively obnoxious. I could endure my surroundings no longer. So I jumbled my clothes into a bag, locked my studio door and started for London.

My love was in the yearning period,

which precedes despondency or satiety. It quivered through my veins. Helplessly I was borne on the crest of a tidal wave of passion.

Dorothy, you are right in doubting. What has my heart to give you but sterility? Moira's glance shrivelled the fine spiritual bloom. Lioba merely profaned the outer shell; she left the sanctuary untouched. My love for Moira has been more masculine than spiritual, but can I say it leaves my soul untainted?

But I did not stop to ask that question then. Moira's cold glance when we met; the unconcerned pressure of her hand; her unfeeling laughter, all lashed me tormentingly. She used my love as a diversion. Occasionally she threw a sop to my famishing soul, and when I lapped her hand in gratitude bestowed a cuff for my impertinence. But I went on gorging her with love, until of necessity she became indisposed

from over feeding, and all the while I starved.

How long was it? Six months, not more, in which I languished before growing wise. It seemed an age.

"Bah!" said d'Argenteuil. "A woman is won by indifference and lost by indulgence. Take my advice, pack up and go to Paris, stay three months, and if you love her still, come back to London. Then try inconstancy and insolence, and she 'll be yours in a week."

For a wonder I took his advice, but much to his surprise I stayed the three months—and came back.

His little eyes dilated somewhat on seeing me. He twirled his mustache thoughtfully a moment. "There are but two classes of people," he said, in his Gallic idiom. "*Ceux qui sont bêtes et ceux qui font des bêtises.* My dear fellow

you are incomprehensible. You belong to both."

"Yes, I am stupid enough to love her still."

"A lover is often an imbecile, but always a fool. It is evident that you need a keeper. Take supper with me to-night. Vance, I have n't seen her for three weeks, she will be there. Perhaps she can hypnotise you. Who knows?"

Of course Moira was there. I might have seen through d'Argenteuil's little pleasantry, but perhaps he was right. I was decidedly fatuous in those days. I had, however, firmly resolved to adopt new tactics. Servility was a failure, I would try domineering.

Moira lolled in one of d'Argenteuil's big easy chairs as I entered. She was looking over some photographs. D'Argenteuil, *siempre galante*, was turning an extravagant compliment for the edification of big, buxom Lilian Vance,

who, laced several degrees beyond the comfortable breathing point, was standing near the window gasping for air.

As I spoke to my host Moira glanced up languidly.

"Hallo, Guy! Back again."

"Yes," I muttered without turning my head. Moira said nothing, but I felt she was looking at me. After a word or two with Vance I wandered about the room, pretending to examine d'Argenteuil's collection of curios and bibelots. Moira continued to glance at the photographs. I came nearer to her and began to hum a tune.

"Guy," she said finally, "I hope you are amused."

"Tremendously."

"I 'm very glad."

"Why?"

"Amateur theatricals are extremely distressing to the spectators, but if the performers are amused I suppose one

ıust occasionally be charitable and ndure them."

"I don't understand the inference."

"Why, Guy, your acting is positively bsurd. You are over-doing the part nd your stage business is simply ridiclous."

"I was not aware that I was an aspirnt for histrionic honors."

"Oh, but you are, Guy. As a profesional you may pardon me if I give you few hints."

"I should be delighted," I said, rith a vain attempt at a sarcastic tone. One usually pays dearly for the advice f such talent as yours."

"Sit down, Guy, and I will point out our mistakes."

I took a chair and drew it near ers.

"You have a new rôle," she said, Sarcastic indifference. It is better hosen than the mawkish sentimentality ou tried on me before you went to

Paris, but your conception of the part is bad."

"You presume a great deal."

"I have a pair of eyes and a little acumen, Guy. Now how much better it would have been for you to have entered the room with just a bit of swagger, greet me rather cordially, turn a pretty but meaningless compliment, chaff me some; perhaps, say I was looking uncommonly well, find fault with my gown, and then pass on to Vance in the same careless way. That would have puzzled me. I would have thought you clever, and of course I should have liked you. But what do you do? Treat me with studied contempt; avoid me as a plague; stare at the pictures; glower when I look at you, and make an ass of yourself generally."

"When the Lord supplied you with gifts, Moira, he was prodigal with perspicuity, but miserly with manners."

"That's rather smart, Guy, even if it

is rude; why do n't you say things like that oftener?"

"I do when it 's worth while."

"Then you 'd better make it worth while. There are but two things women care to hear."

"What are they?"

"If a woman knows she is plain, she likes to be told she is beautiful, and if she knows she is good looking she likes to be told she's clever. The mistake men make is in always complimenting pretty women on their looks and plain ones on their intellects."

"Will you take Miss Marston in to supper, Guy?" said d'Argenteuil at my elbow.

"Moira," I said, as we walked away, "A face such as yours is like the beautiful binding of a choice book; it merely attracts one to the cleverness within."

"Guy, you are improving; but let me ask you how many people admire

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the binding and let the leaves remain uncut ?"

"Such Philistines are incapable of appreciating the rare treasures of your heart; that privilege should belong to a true lover of the beautiful, such as I."

"Guy you are positively fascinating."

Yes, a bold, vigorous spirit came over me suddenly. Trenchant words flew from my lips unprompted. What pleasure is there like the conscious power of heart over heart? A man's love may beseech with cringing, famished gaze, but even in a wretched heart like that a rebellious spirit may be surging. Finally it breaks forth, and the starveling becomes a robust man conscious of his power. Then for a brief hour he tastes the sweets of mastery.

But if the mutinous slave have a Moira for his mistress a subtlety far stronger than his own rude vigor will trap him back to servitude again.

Let me enjoy the memory of that hour of liberty.

I felt the wine tingle through me. Its sparkle inspired my skillful onset, yet I retained the mastery of myself. As I leaned towards Moira her eyes glistened provokingly in the mellow candle-light; then they softened and met my glance tenderly. For a moment she was sympathetic and womanly, then the impulsive smile came back to vex me, and her tantalizing laughter filled the room.

"Moira," I said, "if you were not a paradox you might be a paragon."

"How so?"

"You have every element of a perfect woman except a heart."

"Guy, you malign me. I have an organ of that description, I really have, I assure you, but it is n't transparent."

"Is it anything more than a pump for your arteries?"

"Wrong again, Guy; it is a furnace of molten love."

"Then it must be surrounded like most furnaces by a huge brick wall. I suppose the most I can expect is to be allowed to warm my hands against the glowing outer surface."

"But somewhere there is a little door, Guy, through which the inner fires must be fed. Why have you never found it?"

"Because the route lies through a labyrinth. Each time I try to reach it, I come against some obstruction. I have about made up my mind that it is like the maze at Hampton Court; there is nothing at the centre but an empty cell."

She looked into my eyes. "Guy, you are just a little nearer to-night than you have ever been."

"Then is it worth my while to try just a little harder and see if I can solve the mystery?"

"That is for you to decide."

"And the route?"

"That is for you to discover."

"It must lie through your lips; your eyes are altogether too mysterious."

"If you go on like that, I may love you just a trifle."

"Truthful for once, Moira; nothing could be more trifling than your love."

"That is insolent."

"No, it is merely inauspicious."

"Why?"

"Because the moment to call a woman's love a trifle is when you possess it."

"Then you would better call mine a stern reality."

"A reality perhaps, but more inscrutable than stern. Indeed, I am not quite sure if he who reaches your heart will find a pageant or a paradise."

"That will do, Guy. I am going to talk to d'Argenteuil."

She turned her back with a petulant toss of the head. I laughed.

I felt the exultation of a pirate who has thrown off all allegiance to civilization and hoisted the black flag. I was my own master, free to conquer and destroy. Alas; I sailed in a frail ship, vulnerable to the first shotted broadside from Moira's eyes. My demonstration surprised her, undoubtedly, but thinking a show of force sufficient she amused herself by firing a few blank shots across my bows.

As I did not surrender, she resolved to clear for action.

Her eyes sparkled. She smiled, but always at d'Argenteuil.

I endeavored to retaliate by talking to Vance. Somehow the other conversation was all I heard.

Occasionally one meets a woman like Vance, who is aggressively vulgar. She wears gowns so tight that they crackle when she moves, and each time one sees her she exhales some new scent a trifle more nauseating than the last.

She invariably talks shop. There is some reference to the "profession" in every sentence she speaks, and when she has gulped a glass or two of champagne, her rasping laughter rumbles through the room continuously. Yet she has had admirers, and diamonds galore. I have never understood how men accustomed to the society of well-bred women become fascinated by vulgar creatures who have no charm more apparent than a repletion of feminine plumpness.

When Moira leaves the theatre she leaves the stage behind. She has the manners if not the morals of a gentlewoman, and therein lies her danger.

Such were the thoughts which absorbed me.

Finally, exasperated by my abstraction, Vance hit my knuckles with her fan.

"Wake up, you silly," she said.

Moira saw the action and smiled. D'Argenteuil laughed outright.

"I was n't asleep, I was only meditating on morals."

"La, la, what stupidity," said d'Argenteuil.

"Yet moral laws do exist."

"Yes," he replied; "they exist like ze egg shells only to be broken."

"And when they are broken decay ensues."

"A pleasant topic for a supper table," interrupted Moira.

"I call morals bad form," said Vance.

"That ez because you are a bad case, ez it not so?" laughed d'Argenteuil.

"How insulting!"

"My dear, the insinuation is flattering," said Moira. "Bad people are dangerous."

"Well, d'Argenteuil should be a judge," I suggested; "he has known enough of them."

"That ez true. I have never known any other kind."

"An implied insult to me," exclaimed Moira.

"I thought you considered it a compliment, my dear," said Vance.

"It depends entirely upon the recipient. One should be complimented for one's chief charm, not one's chief defect."

Vance pondered a moment, but failed quite to see what Moira intended.

"My neighbor considers morals bad form; what do you think of them, Moira?" I asked.

"I fear I have but one rule in my moral code, and I am sure it is not golden."

"And that is?"

"Do unto others as they do unto you."

"If you obey that law you will love me."

"Ah, but according to d'Argenteuil, moral laws are made to be broken."

"So they resemble hearts?"

"Yes, because like hearts they are

merely impositions. To believe in either is to become supremely wretched."

"Then you do n't believe in love?"

"Only with certain limitations."

"Explain, pray."

"Love should be a dissipation, not a diet."

"It depends upon one's constitution. To me love is a distemper, contracted by contact with a pair of eyes."

"Then it is a pity you were not born blind."

"I am blind to every one but you, Moira."

"I am tremendously sorry; can't I lend you my dog and string?"

"Is it a case of love you, love your dog?"

"No, but Totsy has been with her mistress so long that she would probably know how to lead you into some new folly within the week."

"You do not paint yourself in exculpatory colors."

"No, I am not hypocritical. That is one advantage we Bohemians have over patrician women. We are supposed to be bad, and we are seldom disobliging; they are expected to be good and they are always disappointing."

"Then fidelity finds no place in your code of love."

She laughed. "Guy, a woman's love is like her bonnet; it changes with the season. The one is selected to suit her mood, the other to match her complexion. Extravagant women like me keep a supply of both always on hand, lest sameness become wearisome."

"Then let me be the old rainy day bonnet, which is always thrown about, but never thrown away."

Her eyes grew serious. "I think too much of you for that, but not enough to have you with me always. You knew me before my career began, and I am sure you think of me as I was then. You do n't know all the steps by which

I have risen. Throw me out of your heart and trample on me. Do, that 's a good boy, Guy."

She turned and spoke to d'Argenteuil.

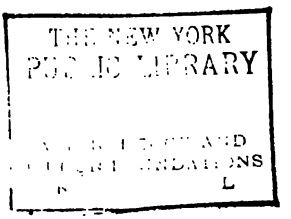
I played with the stem of my glass.

"Wake up, Guy," said d'Argenteuil, finally. "La Belle Marston, she make you serious. Believe not in her. Ze women are like ze anarchists, always plotting against man."

"Alas!" I exclaimed. "What terrible exterminatives they carry hidden in their eyes."

"Guy, you are despondent," he said, "Be joyful, be gay. Come, ve will amuse you, make you merry. Ve will sing. Vance, she will dance for you her new dance, de papillon. Ez it not so, Vance? No, not if I touch the piano myself? Ah, I thought so, come everybody to ze salon, ve will all dance."

I suppose that to every lover of a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woman such as Moira an hour must come when the image of purity which the heart has treasured as a symbol of ideal womanhood is overturned, and an enticing idol of flesh and blood is raised in its place. Then the soul becomes stupefied by the mental debauches into which one plunges, and through excessive zeal for the new goddess, the worship becomes a sort of moral fetichism.

That night as I drove home with Moira from d'Argenteuil's my heart was racked by the tormenting rites of adoration.

A drizzling rain beat against the windows of the cab; the hoofs fell monotonously on the pavement; swiftly through narrow, tortuous streets the hansom rolled, and eagerly I watched for the momentary gleam in Moira's eyes of each passing street lamp. Countless love phrases rose to my lips, yet each seemed inadequate. Now that we were

alone the very excess of my infatuation made me speechless.

A lover is often a dumb drudge, but a flirt is always garrulous and plausible. Did women remember this the ravages of deceivers might be curtailed.

But there will always be a horde of love-fanatics of both sexes, anxious to become martyrs to their own credulity.

I am one of them.

And Moira glories in the rôle of Torquemada.

"Guy," she said, as we entered her cosy little drawing-room, "You ought to be a footman, you attend to one's wants so delightfully, and never speak except when spoken to. Do you know you were absolutely silent all the way from Half Moon street."

"I was afraid to speak."

Her eyes grew thoughtful. I removed her long fleecy wrap and placed it over a chair. She sank into the corner of a low divan and threw her head back

against the cushions. The rays of a lamp, mellowed by a crimson shade, fell on her face, and, beyond, a tall palm loomed through the gloom. She fingered the tassel of a cushion and smiled.

"Guy, you are nothing but a big overgrown boy," she said; "but I like you."

"You think of me as you knew me before."

"I think of you as you are, a silly boy, half in love."

"Rather a man completely, wholly, entirely in love."

"Come here, Guy," she said impetuously.

Approaching her I leaned upon the tall back of the divan and looked down into her face. Suddenly she threw her arms about my neck and kissed me. Then she laughed.

"I love you to-night, Guy."

"I love you always."

"My love is merely a whim to-night; to-morrow a regret, perhaps."

Her eyes burnt through me. Her kiss was no longer the fluttering kiss of a timid girl, but in the pressure of her lips I felt the impulsive love of a woman. For a moment the suddenness with which that love was given startled me, then it seemed as though our souls were stripped bare and we stood there reckless, each knowing the secret of the other's naked heart.

And so I was borne down into the furious eddies. The pure image, if ever my love for Moira was pure, was shattered, and my life became a feverish clutch after the varied sensations of a capricious woman's moods.

I wish I had faith in something. I suppose that is cynical. Sometimes I wonder whether a cynic's scoffs are ever sincere. Whenever I scout at faith or morality my sneers are but the reverberations of my own follies. My derision

of the faith of others is like the barking of a dog at night. The sound of my voice gives me courage.

Someone has said, I think it is the younger Dumas, that "man's hope of an immortal life comes from his despair at finding this life mortal." Oh, the despair I have felt while groping through the darkness of agnosticism.

I struck out boldly enough to swim with the current of enlightenment. Swiftly, surely, I was borne onward. One by one the parental tenets were left behind, but now that I am weary, I ask myself the question—towards what shore flows this stream of reason? I feel too weak to turn back and stem the tide; but is the light which has guided me the truth or only its parhelion?

When d'Argenteuil scoffs, I invariably shudder. Is it merely the reflex action of my childhood's credulity, or is it the quivering of a conscience?

As a matter of fact I suppose I am no

better than d'Argenteuil, and yet I have pitied him at times.

Perhaps that pity was anguish.

Or conceit.

There is nothing like a proper conception of one's own character, so I will open another bottle of soda, and drink to what I suppose I am—that worthless, flippant, counterfeit, a modern young man.

In the privacy of these four walls I can safely take off the disguise with which my pretensions have clothed me, but heaven grant that no one else shall see the lean, miserable sham which shivers before my heart's eye.

No, I shan't think over those two years in London.

If Moira's love had ever been wholly and completely mine I might have been happy.

I was never more than a caprice.

Oh, the fatal error of letting a woman supersede my art.

London life! what did it mean to me?

I made many acquaintances and few pictures, and yet I had what the world calls success. I was in evidence. And why? Because I painted the countess of Kildale, and the duchess of Westhampton took me up. Then my affair with Moira became known, and in consequence the women flocked to my studio. They could not meet Moira, oh, dear, no; she was an actress; but I became in their eyes that most fascinating of objects, a dangerous man.

I value some people, I tolerate others, but I despise the canting society women who gather up their skirts in the presence of a Moira, and deceive their husbands with a dexterity only equalled by the readiness with which they hoodwink their lovers.

But I was in love with Moira, so perhaps I have a fellow-feeling for those husbands. At any rate I shall not

brood over the hypocrisy of society. If I did I should end by waving a red flag in Trafalgar Square.

After all there is goodness in the world, but its neck is seldom exposed, and it owns few diamonds.

Curious, how suddenly a decision which may affect one's whole life is sometimes reached.

I remember the day as though it were yesterday. But it was only six months ago.

A sickly fire sputtered in my grate; occasionally it crackled, and then a wind-blast hurled a little cloud of smoke into the room, flecking the hearth with soot. The air was grey with a chilling fog which had penetrated through crack and crevice, and hung in wreathy clouds about the studio. From the sky-light a leaden light fell gloomily upon a half finished portrait. With a palette

on my hand I stood shivering before my easel trying to undo some academical touches too readily copied from my model.

What could one paint in such an atmosphere!

Disgusted, I put the palette down, and plunging my hands in my pockets, paced the room thoughtfully.

My London studio was always my pride, but that morning it was loathsome.

The art objects, once so carefully chosen, looked ill assorted. My Florentine marriage coffer seemed but a tawdry chest of painted wood; the Flemish cabinet too ungainly for the room. I wondered how I ever chose the hangings; nothing blended with them; but the day before I had spoken of them with pride to Lady Lester.

I paused before a tulip wood secretaire with Sevres plaques and Ormolu mountings. It was a gem, but it al-

ways seemed out of place amid the more sombre furniture of the studio. That morning it positively annoyed me, and I wished I had some other place to put it.

On the ledge of this desk were a few silver trinkets and a couple of miniatures. Prompted rather by nervousness than interest I examined the latter.

I once bought them at a sale at Christies, and they were labeled thus in the catalogue:

"1078, a lady in pink and blue robes, temp. Queene Anne, oval, enamel, *Webb.*"

"1079, a gentleman in blue coat, Temp. Queene Anne, oval, enamel, *The same.*"

Perhaps this gentleman in a blue coat was my ancestor, I thought. As well he as any. I was once curious enough about my family to look up the Whartons in a colonial genealogy, and I found two from either of whom I might

be descended. The one was a courtier, in Queen Anne's time ruined at play, and the other was deported for sheep stealing. But what should ancestry matter to an American? Family is the apology of mediocrity. The pride of a genius should be himself, and when one is not a genius humility is the more becoming pose. Unless perchance one forms part of that fortunate generation which in America stands between shirt sleeves and shirt sleeves. Then one may swell one's chest complacently and be laughed at by sensible people for the absurdity of one's pretensions.

I fear it is only in my closet that I talk like that, but of course I am not a genius, therefore I must pose for something in order to impose on somebody. The grandeur of most of us lies in our pretensions; without them we should be drummed out of the social camp.

But that morning I wondered if Mr. 1079 ever tried to squeeze consolation

from witless cynicism because he was in love with Miss 1078 and knew he was but a gewgaw with which she played when the spirit moved her.

And did my fair lady in pink and blue robes coquette with a dozen men at once, and when angry words rose to the lips of suffering Mr. 1079 did she stifle them with a glance from those lustrous eyes, and in her heart mock his gullibility?

I presume so, for she looked capable of it.

They both ate and drank and loved and died. Was life to them a sapless jumble of frivolities and sick headaches, or did they find it worth the living?

Perhaps they do n't know; perhaps they are sleeping, and will sleep on through all eternity.

Perhaps.

Emile Wister once painted Moira's miniature and mine. A century hence we may be sold as a lady in green and

a gentleman in a black coat; temp. Victoria.

And what will it matter?

"Well, my dear friends," I said, as I replaced the miniatures on the shelf, "you cost me £5, 10s. and the only pleasure you have afforded me is a few moments senseless reflection.

"But you did not help me to forget last night," I continued, abstractedly. I might have expected it, I suppose, but since our last quarrel I had actually begun to believe in Moira's sincerity. She was so plausible; and I am so gullible. But she could n't explain away that night. Those glances into the wings, the taunting way she smiled as she left me standing on the sidewalk and drove off to supper at the Cosmopolitan.

I felt like a miserable whipped puppy, and that was the way she meant me to feel.

She might have been less scandalous about it, I thought—but Lord Kildale,

whose wife is one of my best friends. It 's a confounded shame.

Oh the ignominy of being thrown over by a woman. There is nothing to do but swallow one's medicine.

I wish I did n't care; I do n't care; I won't care.

"If you were a man, Guy Wharton," I cried aloud, "you 'd shake clear of the whole business and leave London. There 's nothing so pitiful as a discarded lover. But I won't give in. Kildale is only a whim. I will win her back. Then be tortured again in another month. I might go out to Chicago to the Exposition and cut loose from her altogether. She is bound to admire independence, if she cares at all.

"What do you say to it, you little red-haired hussy in pink and blue?" I said, angrily, as though addressing the miniature of Miss 1078; "you look enough like Moira to be her twin sister in deception. So you laugh at me too,

do you? And think I'm a fool. I won't have it, confound you. Into the fireplace you go, to burn and sizzle as you ought to.

"Broken in bits are you," I cried, as the miniature fell into the grate. "I'm glad of it."

"Hallo, Guy!"

I glanced up, startled.

Moira was standing in the door. Her little figure was completely hidden by the folds of a huge rain coat, and she wore a smart sailor hat tipped jauntily forwards. The damp air had brought a glow to her cheeks, and her teeth glistened as she smiled.

For the moment I forgot my anger.

"What brought you here!" I exclaimed.

"A hansom."

"Inanity cannot masquerade as cleverness."

"I am very amiable, Guy, so I will let that pass; besides I am bored, and I

could think of nothing more exciting than seeing you, so that is why I am here."

"Really! You might have gone to Berkeley Square, you would have found that exciting enough."

"Yes, Guy, but you forget the hour. Her ladyship would n't receive me so early."

"No, nor at any hour, I fancy. That pleasure is reserved for her husband."

"Hush up, Guy," she said, advancing into the room and throwing aside her raincoat. "I don't like to see you make yourself ridiculous."

"You seem very solicitous about my conduct; were you half as concerned about your own—"

"I would not visit Mr. Wharton alone in his studio and run the risk of losing my reputation. Why don't you have at least one comfortable chair, Guy; and by the way that Chinese god, or whatever you call it, on the mantel annoys

:. He has a very impudent expres-
n, and his costume is positively im-
dest. I wish you would remove
a."

Walking to the fire place I seized the
ending idol and threw him into the
l box with an angry gesture; I
nmed the lid down and glared at
ira.

'Thanks awfully! You 're tremen-
isly obliging to-day."

She hummed a tune and beat time
h her fingers on the arm of her chair.

'By the way, Guy," she said finally,
ildale remarked last night that he
ught you rather good looking. Do
i like compliments?"

I gazed at her wonderingly.

'Moira," I said, "I should honestly
e to know what you think of your-
f?"

'Myself, Guy! Me! What I think?"

'Yes."

'Well, to be frank, when I think of

the salary I am drawing, I am just a little conceited; and then you know my pictures are selling better than those of any woman in London. But when I think that you admire me I feel decidedly cheap."

"Your value of yourself can rise, so far as I am concerned."

"Really, Guy," she replied with a sigh of relief, "I am so glad. You have been such a bother to me the past year. I could n't tell you that you bored me, because I feared to hurt your silly feelings. It 's absurd to have a conscience, is n't it?"

As I met her sneering glance the cruel past came back, yet I longed to see love in her eyes once more. Yes, in spite of everything.

"Guy, why do n't you reply to my question?"

"What did you ask?"

"If it is not absurd to have a conscience?"

"Moira, I think a conscience is a sort of alarm clock, to keep the soul from sleeping too long. Some of us grow so accustomed to its sound that we do not heed it."

"And how fortunate we are. Just think of the delightful dreams one might lose if one minded the humming of such a good-for-nothing pest."

"Yes, if one does n't awake suddenly some day, and realize the precious opportunities one has lost."

"Oh, Guy, your preaching is duller than the fog outside, only the fog is n't dry. By the way, we begin to rehearse the new piece to-morrow."

"Indeed," I said vacantly.

"Well, you might show a little interest."

"I was thinking about my own plans."

"You never plan anything but stupid pictures. Look at that portrait. If I were Lady Lester I should institute a

libel suit. No woman ever had such hands."

"Moira, what pleasure do you derive from being nasty?"

"How peevish, Guy; now, if I were not above displays I might resent that."

"I wish you would. I should like to quarrel. I feel in the mood for it."

"It 's so bad form to get angry."

"That 's the worst about you, Moira, you won't even fight. You make me think I am not worth quarreling with, and I hate you for it."

"That evidence was unnecessary. Other things beside hate convict a man of being a fool."

"Such as loving a Circe."

"For your case, Guy, I should choose another name for the lady; no charmer could change you into a brute, you were born one."

Without answering I gazed into the the fire. I was conscious of a vague, dull pain in my heart.

"Moira, my mind is made up," I aid; "I am going to leave London."

"Sea shore, Guy? Now I come to hink of it, you do look pale."

"I'm going home."

"Home! I didn't know you had ne. I thought you were a vagabond ke myself."

"I am a vagabond. All my life I ave tramped about, living on cast-off ›ve, and occasionally stealing enough appiness to keep my soul from starv- ıg. I am going to begin over gain in America. There is a health- :r air over there than we breathe in ;urope."

"Guy, you're absurd."

"No, I firmly believe that the most umdrum of the middle class existences better in the long run, than this mad ruggle for excitement, this craving for ıe unattainable which has become the ıssion of us moderns. Life is no ınger a duty, leading to salvation, it is

merely a dissipation preceding dissolution."

"What did you have for dinner last night."

"I am in earnest, Moira; why can't you be serious."

"When I become serious it will be because I have exhausted pleasure. Then I shall be ready to die, and I hope the Lord will make quick work of me. If he doesn't, I shall help him."

I gazed at her curiously. I wondered whether her inconsequence was not a disguise for a baffled heart. If only she would throw it aside and let one know the woman underneath the sham.

She met my earnest glance.

"To make an attempt at being serious, Guy," she said. "I thoroughly approve your plan. Six months in America will cure you of patriotism. I shall be there on my tour just in time to find

you the most miserable of homesick men."

"No, Moira, you will find that I have discovered a new inspiration."

"In another pair of eyes, I suppose. I 'm going now, good-bye."

"Do n't go, I have such a lot to say."

"Do n't say it, Guy. Your mind is made up, you might change it. What a calamity that would be."

She came towards me, and taking my hand held it a moment. "Good-bye, Guy. You may kiss me if you like. No, on the cheek, I mean. You won't? Very well, then take that instead," and slapping my cheek with her glove she rushed out of the room.

I stood there, unable for a moment to realize my stupidity. Disarmed by her subtility; charmed by her personality, I mildly repulsed her attack when I should have been the aggressor. And so it has

ever been. Adamantine resolutions are melted by her glance into the flabbiest putty. Oh, the fatuity of a fool in love!

Yet, even then, as I paced the floor, muttering imprecations against Moira, and cursing my own weakness, my resolution to leave London became a purpose, and lest a pair of eyes should suborn my reason, I decided to see Moira no more.

Illusory decision.

I met her in Piccadilly the next morning.

Fortunately d'Argenteuil was with me, else I might have weakened.

Thinking to surprise her, he told her I had taken my passage.

"Yes, I know all about it," she said. "Poor fellow, a change will do him good. He looks awfully seedy. He's been working so hard the past two months. Only one portrait, I know, but then he has put such a lot of thought into it."

Then turning to me she said: "Bye, bye, Guy, shall I see you again. Don't bother to call unless you feel inclined. I'm dreadfully busy rehearsing the new piece, and besides Kildale is teaching me piquet. I'm tremendously fascinated with the game. Do you play piquet, Guy? You ought to learn."

Unintentionally I met her glance.

"Write me when you get to New York," she added, as she turned to leave. "I should like awfully to know whether you were ill crossing. And, by the way, if you run across Dorothy Temple, give her my love. Poor dear, how many sleepless nights she devoted to me. Tell her I'm as circumspect as a gravestone now."

"And shall I add that you are as cold and stony as one?"

"Yes, if you desire to admit your own feebleness."

Then she walked away abruptly and was lost in the fashionable crowd.

"By the way, Guy," said d'Argenteuil, as I gazed after her, "I have news for you, I have been appointed on the Exposition commission—a surprise, Guy, eh!"

I was silent.

"Wake up, Guy."

"Did you speak?"

"Yes, my dear Guy, I said you are an ass."

"I know it."

The most truthful admission I ever made.

No, I am worse than that, I am a coward.

When I was away from Moira I almost forgot her. I must throw her out of my heart. I owe it to myself.

And to Dorothy.

Yes, here I have been dreaming over the past and forgetting everything but that provoking bit of vanity—Moira.

Am I more ravenous than rational. Are lips that tempt and eyes that burn more to me than love in its purest sense? It must be so, else knowing Moira through and through why did I surrender unconditionally to-night?

Out of charity for myself I will not answer.

Suppose I were to tell Dorothy the truth.

I know what her reply would be, she would advise me to marry Moira.

Marry!

There is humor in that suggestion. Moira herself once said that marriages are cages in which hearts snared by the devil are left to languish in captivity.

But the thought of marrying Moira never entered my mind.

Until I met Dorothy marriage seemed a remote and respectable possibility to be reached when my love for Moira was burnt out. Some day I would give my hand to an estimable young Miss,

who would fawn indulgently upon a husband who had seen life. The complacent egotism of that thoroughly masculine point of view never occurred to me.

The average man is content to offer in exchange for the heart of a pure woman a shapeless mass, charred by the flames of unbridled love, and flatter himself that his experience creates a balance in his favor.

We men form a moral mean between the extremes of womanhood.

But occasionally there must be a man who could ask a Dorothy Temple to be his wife without feeling ashamed of his own feebleness.

After all it was a curious working of chance which brought Dorothy into my life again.

For two days after my arrival I breathed the nervous Chicago air, then

I became restless. My ears throbbed with the ceaseless hum of traffic; the crowds in the streets with their anxious faces and twitching eyes made me impatient, and I rushed forth in search of a studio. I wanted to work like the rest, but I wanted to be away from the droning, toiling multitude, so I inspected the highest buildings.

By accident I went to the Masonic Temple. The rooms did not please me and hurrying away I took the elevator at the sixteenth floor. With difficulty I squeezed myself into the gilded cage, then nauseous and dizzy I gripped my knuckles desperately as the floor fell from under me and I sank into fathomless space.

"Goin' down!" shrieked the conductor as he stopped the car with a violent jar and threw back the iron door.

I flattened myself against the wall, and was conscious of the rustle of a wo-

man's skirt. Closing my eyes I held my breath as the car shot downward again.

"Chicago!" shouted the man.

Thankful for the breath of life I shook myself together and walked out at the ground floor.

"You don't seem to like elevators, Mr. Wharton."

It was a woman's voice, deeper, more modulated than those I heard in the streets.

I glanced up startled. A well-dressed girl stood at my elbow. Those keen dark eyes, that wavy hair brushed carelessly back from the temples; it was a face I could never forget.

"Dorothy! Miss Temple!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Guy," she laughed. "Now beg pardon for treading on my toes."

"Don't hold me responsible for my actions in an elevator. I am an European of eight years standing. But did I hurt you?"

"No, but your blank stare hurt my feelings. I must be looking a thousand years older."

"But my eyes were shut. I was lost to everything but sinking sensations."

"Then I forgive you," she said extending her hand. "I confess too that I am thankful for being remembered on any terms, but how do you do, and why are you here?"

"I don't know; I seem to have just awakened from a Rip Van Winkle sleep. No one knows me now, even the dogs eye me suspiciously. You don't know how grateful I am for being remembered by you."

"Why I saw your picture in the paper only this morning, and read all about your triumphs in art."

"And you recognized me! Alas, I flattered myself that picture would help me keep my incognito."

"If you were not a portrait painter, I

might pay you the compliment that invites."

"And why does my trade deny me that pleasure?"

"Because one whose profession is to flatter with the brush might doubt the sincerity of verbal compliment."

"You evidently do n't know us artists. We thrive on flattery and languish on truth."

"Then I fear that for the moment you must go hungry. I am completely stopping this elevator door, and I have a hundred errands to do this morning. But perhaps I might persuade you to walk with me as far as my dentist's door. I will promise to protect Rip Van Winkle from the street urchins."

"If you will tell me all about yourself."

"I can do that before we reach the corner," she laughed.

As I stepped out beside her I meas-

ured her height against my shoulder. She was taller than I remembered her—and more graceful. I took a second glance at her face. Her eyes sparkled in the sunshine. They were spirited and full of light. I noticed a few struggling curls of hair blown carelessly across the temples, and the pale cheeks were delicately flushed with color. As we turned the lofty corner of the Masonic Temple, she bent forward to make headway against a sudden gust of wind, and her superb figure was outlined under the tense folds of her dress.

She looked up suddenly and caught my glance.

"Well?" she said.

"How fast you walk," I muttered. "Are you in a frantic hurry like the other Chicagoans?"

"Life here is nothing but a scramble, you must grow used to it."

"And to these dirty streets; to those

grimy buildings which shut out the light of heaven with their hideous forms —I can't."

She laughed. "You will grow to love them in a year. Every one does. There is an enthusiasm about Chicago life which is resistless."

"Then a painter must be the exception which proves the rule," I said, shaking my head doubtfully. But she was right, in far less than a year the spirit of Chicago seized me, and though alive to the city's faults, I am as jealous of its fame as its most clamorous defender.

We walked a few steps in silence.

"The corner is passed, and you have told me nothing about yourself," I said finally.

"Myself, Guy," she laughed. "Oh, there is really nothing to tell. I would much rather hear about you."

"How politic! You evidently know how fond a man is of talking about

himself. But most women are born diplomats."

"Or dunces," she interrupted. "The mistake we women make is in flattering you men too much, we make you conceited, and a conceited man never loves; he merely longs to be appreciated."

"We artists are conceited, but we excel in loving."

"Opinion is usually experience. I suppose yours is no exception to the rule."

"Yes, I have loved, and I shall love again."

She arched her brows doubtfully.

"But are you sure you loved flattering lips? Was it not a lashing tongue?"

I looked into her face.

"You are very clever," I said.

"No, I have merely a few foolish theories, but I fear they would be scattered to the four winds by the first love-zephyr which chanced to blow my way.

That is the worst of life. One's actions are so unlike one's speculations."

She stopped before the doorway of a smoke-dimmed building of an early Chicago type, standing pygmy like between two giant neighbors.

"I must leave you now, I fear," she said. "You will come and see me, won't you?—but I forgot, you cannot."

"Cannot?" I interrupted. "What crime have I committed in your sight?"

"I am leaving home to-morrow."

"Oh, you are going to the country?"

"No, I shall be in the city, but don't ask me where I am going."

"You have aroused my curiosity, I must know now."

"Oh, it is nothing that would interest you. I am going to spend a month at Hallim Hall. It is a place a lot of us girls have started in the slums, where we are trying to find amusement for the working people and interest them in

improving things. There, that is all I am going to tell you."

"But may I not come and see you there?"

"It would bore you."

"I will chance it if you are there."

"If you come it is at your own risk. Remember I have warned you. Good bye," she added, extending her hand cordially.

"Remember, I am coming," I said, as she turned and left me.

For a moment I followed her with my eyes. A strange girl I thought. How very frank and alert she is. She is attractive too, but she lacks the subtility of Moira, lacks her challenging beauty.

Then as I sauntered back to my hotel I believe I fell to thinking about Dorothy as she was during her college days. I used to think then that her heart was too masculine; but was not that opinion

merely the reflection of my own views on co-education? Was I not unwilling to admit that a girl educated with men could be feminine?

After all it is difficult to remove a prejudice, and my opposition to co-education was of long standing.

But in college I was more or less in love with Moira, so Dorothy was rather an afterthought. An enigma too, for I never understood how a girl in her position could be there at all.

I did not understand Dorothy then, else I should not have impugned her motives.

Still I was curious enough about her to go to Hallim Hall.

I hate being bored, and I love new sensations.

The business jargon of the men at the club bored me to excess. One night I seized my hat in desperation, and rushed out into the street. It was then I thought of visiting Dorothy.

I turned into a great thoroughfare leading southward from the city's heart, a place where evil stalks bare faced under the glare of electric lights.

At night the people of a great city follow their natural impulses. The crowds which swell the streets by day are but a jumble of contradictory ingredients who mix but do not assimilate; but at nightfall the human elements are sorted out. It is the hour of recreation, when the good are separated from the bad and indifferent by affinity. It is the hour to study human nature.

That thought came to me as I sauntered along that street.

I wondered whether all those repulsive creatures who slunk away into the night had souls. And yet they were human.

That girl who strolled past me decked in flashy finery; in the pale glare of the lights, her painted face was ghastly, hideous; her lips drawn and hard, but

in the stare of her glassy eyes there was a pathetic plea for money! money! life!

Did the divine spark still smolder in her breast?

And that skulking pauper who shambled by, with his lean hands plunged in his pockets and the frayed collar of his coat turned up about his ears; hunger and despondency glared from his sunken eyes.

Had he a heart; did he hope?

Yes, he had a thousand times more heart than these low-browed ruffians who huddled in the doorway of that saloon. What evil eyes they had. Within, the lights gleamed on the mirrors and rows of bottles, and through the open door came the clink of glasses and the coarse gloating laugh of the devil.

Those people who passed me, how brutal their faces; how beast-like their little eyes. But they were the repulsive life of this great city. The character of

the people one meets here has changed since I was a boy. There is less vigor and Yankee pluck in their faces, more of the degradation of the European serf.

And those horrible signs I saw painted in flaring colors. Dwarfs, giants, monsters, distorted horrors in spangled hues. A crowd huddled round the door, listening to a clanging band and gaping at the pictured marvels to be viewed within for a dime.

But man has only two cravings. The one is for food, the other for the unknown, the unattainable.

The baby will drop his bottle to watch a sunbeam dancing on the wall. It is the dawn of his soul. For the moment those paupers I saw that night forgot their hunger in contemplation of the mysterious, and to them those jangling discords were music. It was the yearning of gaunt, starved souls.

Yes, there is love for the inscrutable in the heart of every creature. The

savage bows to the painted idol, because to his childish mind it represents the occult. In our souls we artists feel the nature we would idealize. We paint and strive to reproduce the unattainable, but how much grander the conception than its painted likeness.

Those who see the work of a genius marvel at its beauty, but they can never know the ecstatic beauty of the creative soul. That belongs to the genius alone. It is within him, and even to him it is a mystery.

But away with such thoughts. The nauseous smells which oozed from the basements stifled me that night. The broad, straight street, stretching away before me, with its solid blocks of towering buildings, how unpicturesque it was, how ugly? In the day time, with the blue sky above and the sunlight to soften the tones, such a street is endurable; but at night, when the electric lights glare on the ugly square forms of

: stores and the signs stand out
:ing and crude, it is unutterable.
I remember the arrangement of the
ıdows of a large store—fantastic, but
imaginative. A ship built of nap-
ıs, a pyramid of hats, a feudal castle
soap bars, a forest of flaring cravats,
ı a galaxy of multicolored lights
:aming throughout that wilderness of
ıd. A profanation of taste.
That street belongs to the people,
ı what do they care for the tenets of
npered art?
I turned a corner. The comparative
kness of the side street was a relief
:r the glare of those awful lights.
Ah, there was misery! That saloon
h the misty lamps shining dim de-
d the grimy windows, and that mis-
ble drunkard staggering through the
ɔr. A woman too! Ragged, filthy,
h wild haggard eyes, and frowsy
ks floating in the wind. Horrible!
ɔrrible!

I asked a bystander my way to Hallim Hall.

"There," he grunted, pointing back from the street towards the dark form of an old-fashioned house with dull brick walls and dingy pillared portico. A shabby survivor of bygone splendor, standing aloof from the surrounding hovels — like some reduced patrician ashamed of his low-born neighbors.

Making my way across to the stone pavement of a court-yard, I rang at the weather-beaten door.

From the impressions gathered in my walk through the streets, I had formed a weird mental picture of slumming.

I expected to find a cheerless chapel, with wooden benches and scriptural mottoes on the walls, where sullen paupers with hectic cheeks were singing psalm tunes, and somewhere in the midst of a lot of cant and nonsense Dorothy rescuing sinners from the fiery pit.

Yes, several times as I waited before the door, I was prompted to fly.

But a trim Alsatian girl with oval eyes and braids of flaxen hair finally answered my summons. I was taken to the library, and as I waited for Dorothy I glanced about me curiously. The apartment was lofty and square, with tinted plaster ceiling, moulded elaborately in flowers and medallions. Tall palms grew in the corners; a hardwood floor; some comfortable leather chairs, and a scattering of Turkish rugs gave that old-fashioned room a touch of modernism; but what astonished me most was the splendid photographs hanging in large oak frames upon the walls. Meissonier's "La Rixe," a Harvest Field by Breton, Fortuny's Mandolin Player, The Angelus of Millet, and other master-pieces.

On the low cases of well-bound books were some casts of famous bits of sculp-

ture—but where were my religious mottoes?

A few girls gathered about the table were reading. Young, active faces, with keen sparkling eyes. There was a dash of smartness in their dress and the hands that rested on the pages of the books were white and delicate.

A step sounded on the hard floor. I glanced up. Dorothy was entering the room.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting," she said; "I was finishing some entries in my books."

"Your books?"

"Yes, I am the book-keeper here, and I have dreadful times—double entries, trial balances, and all kinds of things I pretend to know about, but do n't. Won't you come into my den? We shall not disturb anyone there."

I followed her across the room to an alcove separated from the library by a

heavy curtain. An office desk, a letter file, a few well selected photographs, a huge map, and three chairs was the furniture of this retreat.

"So this is your workshop," I said. "It is delightful, but tell me what you do here. I confess the whole place is somewhat of a puzzle. Those attractive girls in the other room, are they your co-workers or merely rescued sinners?"

"They are residents," she laughed.

"And are you a resident or an inmate?"

"This month I am sort of warden or keeper, if you will persist in thinking us lunatics."

"So you preside."

"In a way, yes. You see two of us girls organized the work here four years ago, just after I left college. It was quite simple at first; we only had a flat and did very little; but gradually others joined us and then we got this house

and fitted it up, and, really, we feel quite proud of our quarters. I used to live here all the time until my mother died. Now, I spend every other month with my father.

"But what do you do here? Read books and look at pictures? I should n't mind that, myself."

"Does such skepticism deserve an answer?"

"I am not skeptical, I am merely ignorant."

"And irreverent."

"No, plain ignorant. My ideas of slumming are woefully vague. Tell me what you do, won't you? I am most reverential."

She hesitated a moment as though doubtful of my sincerity.

"In the first place," she said, "We call Hallim Hall a social settlement. We believe the working classes should be improved by social intercourse and healthy amusement. Oh,

dear, that sounds just like a lecture. Let me give you a pamphlet to read."

"I would much rather you told me. Please go on."

"Well, from that idea the scheme worked itself out. We got acquainted with the people and then we tried to interest them. We organized evening classes in literature, ethics and languages; we gave concerts and got up theatricals; we started art classes and formed women's clubs, *crèches*, music classes, kindergartens, co-operative associations, and any number of other schemes; but I am too enthusiastic about the work, and I forget you do not sympathize."

"But I do, I assure you. I am astonished too. I expected—I dare not say what I expected. And that map there with the little squares of green, blue and yellow, what is that?"

"Oh, that is a map of the slums with the houses colored according to the

nationality of the inhabitants. The green are Irish, the blue, Italians, the yellow, Bohemians, and so on."

"How interesting! But there is one street nearly all white."

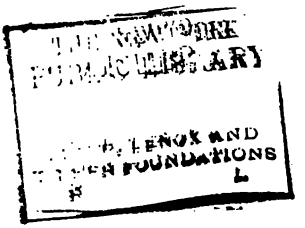
"The white are Americans, and that street I am sorry to say contains the lowest resorts."

"So you whitewash the natives."

"Yes, because they are whited sepulchres. But you will understand our work better if you let me show you about or rather 'tote' you, as we girls say."

She walked before me with a quick, earnest step. Her tall figure was set off by the graceful folds of a bluish linen gown, and her splendid hair was caught together in a loose knot, just where the delicate neck met the sloping shoulders. I felt a thrill of admiration.

"This is the poetry class," she said, stopping before a partly open door. "Peep in, but don't make a noise."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I took a hurried glance at some twenty girls and men who were seated about a long table. The faces of the girls were pale and weary looking, but they had bright, intelligent eyes. The men seemed older and more sullen, I thought. Across the room was a curtained alcove where a piano stood on a raised platform. A palm grew in a large blue vase and a guitar rested against a chair. Beyond were some *bas reliefs* in plaster.

"Now if you will promise not to laugh," said Dorothy, "I will show you the art room and studio."

"On the contrary, you arouse my professional curiosity. But who teaches art?"

"All our teachers are volunteers, most of them are girls, but a few men help us in the teaching. There is no art class to-night, so I can only show you the rooms."

Leaving the house we crossed the

courtyard to a quaint rambling structure, with gabled roof and leaded windows, the gift of some well-wisher of the cause. Passing a partly open door, through which I caught a glimpse of bookshelves and green topped tables, where pallid working people were studying by the light of shaded lamps, we climbed the winding stairs to the floor above, and entered a long empty room with bare red walls and a skylight overhead.

"This is where we have loan exhibits," said Dorothy, with a hurried gesture. "There is nothing here now. Come into the studio, won't you?"

I followed her to the next room.

On the walls hung a few sketches and a plaster *bas-relief* of a Roman Triumph. Upon the narrow ledge of a locker were casts of well-known heads, color boxes and brushes, bits of crayon and copies of Greek and Etruscan vases. Scattered about the room on

working easels were perhaps a dozen sketches in oil or charcoal.

I took up the canvas nearest me. Dorothy caught my arm. "Do n't look at that," she said.

"I must, my curiosity is aroused now."

It was a sketch in oils of a peasant woman standing alone in a ploughed field. There was a touch of sadness in the pose and the face turned wistfully away, glowed in the reddish light of the setting sun.

I glanced up. There was an anxious, expectant look in Dorothy's eyes.

"Did you do it?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, taking the picture from me and replacing it with a disappointed gesture.

"There is real feeling for color in that sketch; where did you study?"

"A few terms at the Art Institute; I have n't time to do much."

"You should certainly go on. I wish you would come to my studio and

paint; I might help you with a hint or two."

"Would you?" she said, glancing up with radiant eyes. "A word from you would mean so much. You do n't know what pleasure I am given by even the little I do."

"Dorothy," I said, eyeing her inquisitively, "You are very complex. I don't understand you."

She smiled.

"That is because you fail to see how very simple I really am."

"You are too extraordinary to be simple. You love art, you have talent, too; yet you deliberately bury yourself in the slums."

"I would not give up this work for all the art in the world."

"But there is enough drudgery on this earth already, why create any more? Mind, I admire your unselfishness, but I can't help asking why you give up so much for this work."

She clasped her hands together thoughtfully.

"Humanity is such a pitiful spectacle. I can't look on quietly. I must do something. If I can provoke an occasional smile, I am satisfied."

"Am I to understand you aspire to the rôle of low comedian in the drama of life?"

"No, I am only a stage hand. I want to help lower the curtain on a few lives ending more happily than they began."

"But you can't remove evil from the world. If you rescue some, others will take their places."

"I am a thorough optimist, Guy. I believe the general tendency of the world is towards the good."

"But can the efforts of one girl, however brave, accomplish much?"

"It is not the sudden blows of a giant which weaken evil, it is the continuous tapping of an army of dwarfs like me."

Dorothy's eyes sparkled. Her voice

had an earnest ring. I could not help sharing her enthusiasm. Turning away thoughtfully, I examined the sketch again.

"Perhaps you are right," I said; "but the cleverness of this bit of work makes me begrudge the time you give to philanthropy. You know I have but one worship, the beautiful."

She smiled.

"Being a man, I suppose your creed occasionally takes a feminine form."

"How could it be otherwise? The apotheosis of the beautiful is woman."

"And how many women has your fancy deified since pretty Moira Bracker?"

This sudden reference to Moira startled me. I felt a blush tingle in my cheek.

"By the way," I said awkwardly, "she has made a great hit in London. I met her in the street a few days before I sailed. She wanted to be remem-

bered to you. Sent love and all that sort of thing."

I felt the penetrating glance of Dorothy's eyes.

"Are n't you going to 'tote' me some more?" I asked, hurriedly. "I have n't seen the half yet."

A man is always in love with three women—so some Frenchman has said —The one he loved, the one he loves, and the one he is going to love.

I should call the first a regret, the second a rebound and the third a recurrence. Or is n't it merely a relapse? I wonder how those clever fellows who write books turn out epigrams. Do they flow out ready made, or are they worked out with a dictionary? If the latter is the truth they would n't acknowledge it, I suppose.

Nor would I care to avow my fickleness to anyone but myself—yet that

night as I walked home from Hallim Hall I began to think about Dorothy.

I owed nothing to Moira; I had a perfect right to think about Dorothy. And I did.

She was interesting because she was incomprehensible. She seemed like one of those mystic mazes where one wanders about, delighted, startled, but unable to find the way out.

I admired her beauty. I appreciated her artistic tastes. I did not understand her philanthropy, and, I am ashamed to confess, I doubted her sincerity. But, as Dorothy said that day in the street, opinion is experience, and my experience with women had made me doubtful of them all. Dorothy was merely frank and genuine, and because she was, I fancied then, that it was a clever trick to disguise something.

How little we men know about women, and how cleverly they flatter us into believing that we understand them.

But Dorothy is not subtle like the others. I scarcely know how I grew fond of her.

Perhaps, like a famished beggar I was glad to accept a few crumbs of friendship in lieu of a love feast. Starving for Moira's love, I was driven to Dorothy for solace.

But love is an appetite—or an anesthetic. It is a gnawing hunger which must be gorged to be satisfied, or a soothing draught for the weary heart.

After that night at Hallim Hall Dorothy never referred to Moira and I tried to forget her. I tried to reason myself out of my infatuation; but when least expected my cheek flushed suddenly at the thought of her, my pulses quickened, a little paroxysm of desire seized me.

My love for Moira was intermittent, but it was a fever still, and delirious at times.

I thought of her as I walked through

the streets, as I worked in my studio, or at night when I tried to sleep. But I met Dorothy frequently, sometimes by chance, often by intent, and her presence was always soothing and satisfactory.

Yes, Dorothy has the instinct of an artist.

It is a pleasure to have some one to listen, to understand, to appreciate. Her taste is marvelous; she loves the beautiful passionately—and adores the slums. I never can forget that absurd contradiction. But she sympathizes with my ambitions and understands my work.

Moira never cared for my art. She was wrapt up in her own success.

If only one might love a girl like Dorothy. I used to say in those days when she first came to the studio—she is such a thorough woman and Moira so feminine. If that means anything.

What a solemn toned clock that is.

One, two, three, four.

Is it so late as that? How I have been dreaming. And the decision as unmade as ever. Well, I might as well light this old pipe again and make a night of it.

Moira once said, that a woman's happiness depends upon her waist measure, and I remember Dorothy telling me that she thought happiness was merely the habit of good impulses.

Aren't one's views apt to be the true valuation of oneself inadvertantly expressed ?

I suppose when Moira told me that good manners were merely a mask for bad motives, she very nearly hit the bull's eye of her own character.

But Moira's manners are half her charm, and the other half is her looks.

All of which is rather ungenerous

—for after all, Moira, with all your faults I—

Do I ?

She is sparkling, exhilarating, insidious, but she always leaves a bad taste the next day.

Yet she is a difficult habit to break off.

But how genuine Dorothy is. One might take her three hundred and sixty-five days in the year and never be any the worse for it. I am glad I have known her, even if nothing more comes of it. A man is better for knowing that such a girl exists.

I am glad too that I painted Dorothy's portrait.

It brought us together and taught me her character—taught me to love, I was on the point of saying. Well, the portrait was a success, and I shall send it to the Champ de Mars next year.

I wonder why she was so persistent in refusing to let me do it ? Whatever her faults be, vanity is not one. But even

she is vulnerable to compliment, for my flattery about her Italian type of face induced her to let me design that Florentine gown.

How stunning she was in it.

That night after she left Hallim Hall, and I called in Prairie Avenue for the first time, she was a revelation.

I see her now sitting in an old Italian chair with high carved back and lion's paws for arms. Her head, turned slightly aside, rests against one hand; her delicate arms, bared to the elbow, are lost in puffy velvet sleeves, and the other hand with tapering fingers and rosy tinted tips falls gracefully over an arm of the chair. A broad Medici collar of old lace sets off the clear white neck, and the shadows of the face are perfectly defined. The wavy hair brushed away from the forehead is held at the back by a gold comb. The dark eyes, calm and soulful for the moment, look at me dreamily.

"Do n't move," I cried suddenly; "Look!"

I pointed to a mirror across the room.

"There; that is the picture *I* would paint. May I?" She smiled.

"Yes, if you think it worth while."

How feeble are one's efforts to portray such an impression. I suppose it is because the imagination is so vivid that any touch of the brush is but an impotent attempt to reproduce the feelings of the heart.

But what appears worst at the hour of creation is often one's best work. Yes, at moments the torturing pains of labor seem unbearable, but when the child of one's imagination is born—the living image of one's inner heart—the suffering is forgotten in the ecstacy of success.

How little a Philistine knows about an artist's heart.

We artists sympathize with all the world. The simplest impressions give us pleasure. It may be only the shadow of a cloud on sheep-nibbled turf, but some day it will come forth in our work. Then others feel a part of what we have felt ourselves.

But what is our art?

Our admirers flatter themselves that we painters offer them the true essence of nature. They think we have extracted the pith and thrown away the chaff. But what of the subtle effects of light, which no brush could produce? What of our desperate struggles with "the untranslatable in nature?"

I remember one day in particular, when I was at work on Dorothy's portrait.

I was alone, subduing here, intensifying there. The balmy air of a June day floated softly through an open win-

dow. A vase of roses at my side ex-
haled a fragrant odor of spring. From
time to time a fleecy cloud passed
before the sun, and the warm light was
changed to shadow, while the distant
rumble of wheels upon the cobbles of
the street below, reminded me of the
grimy, surging city I longed to forget.

I stopped to gaze at my work. How
lifeless the picture seemed to me. I
had attempted to describe her features
and had made nothing but a strained
and poorly colored academical draw-
ing. The fear of not doing justice had
made me write down every detail of her
face with equal emotion. Why had I
not left untold some of those unneces-
sary details, and why had I not striven
to express the delicate freshness of her
skin, the mobile expression of her lips
and eyes? Why had I not left some
nervous touches unsubdued? Shall I
never know when to stop, instead of
spoiling by finnicky touches all the

inspired modelling of my interpretation?

How often have I caught a wonderful brilliancy—an inexpressible brilliancy of the eyes, and by attempting to complete certain details, lost all life?

I saw, then, that the living portraits of Sargent's dashing brush would lose all quality if he added the dreamy touch of Quentin de la Tour. One cannot in one picture be a Franz Hals and a Greuze. Certainly I had not chosen the right technical expression for a face like Dorothy's; but where was my skill, where were the daring touches with which I paint men?

The social success of my portraits of women had carried me away on the smooth but vividless waves of *Mièvrerie*.

In an hour Dorothy would come, I must try to give form to my work—try to soften her eyes and subdue the hardness of the line of the lips and the nostrils.

As I cannot make her live I must try to make her dream. I will try—I must try.

Yes, I despised what I had done—despaired for what I could not do.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in;" I cried gruffly, too out of patience with myself to be polite.

I glanced up.

Dorothy was standing in the open door. She was smiling, and her dark spirited eyes glistened under the brim of a large hat, with bobbing ostrich plumes and glittering ornaments of steel.

She wore a simple dress of crinkled grey which hung in graceful folds. The sleeves, with cuffs of lace, were full, and there was a dash of something black about the waist. Around the neck was a pleated collar of heliotrope velvet, which blended with the softness of the grey.

No, I never forget a dress. If paint-

ing fails me I shall become a dress-maker.

"May I come in?" asked Dorothy hesitatingly. "I'm an hour too early, but I was obliged to be down town, and I thought you might n't object to a longer sitting."

"Come in, if you do n't mind beard-ing a very disagreeable brute in his den."

"You look docile enough," she replied. "I think I 'll risk it. But why are you a brute?"

"I'm tremendously out of sorts. It's one of my blue days, I suppose. My work is hopelessly bad; yards and yards of canvas covered for the benefit of nobody but the colorman."

"You don't deserve your success, Guy," she said, advancing into the room.

"Success! The greatest of us artists are but pigmies beside our feelings. We can never realize our highest conceptions. What is the use of working?"

"For the satisfaction of doing some-

thing," she replied, glancing over my shoulder at the portrait.

"What do you think of it?" I asked. I was in a mood to accept any criticism.

"Are n't you finishing too much? Why do n't you aim more for color than drawing; why don't you leave your brush marks?"

I glanced up astonished. The keenness of her criticism startled me. In a word this girl had pointed out the principal defect of my work.

"Too much detail," Viraut used to say. "Put in more passion; remember Franz Hals."

"Where did you learn so much?" I said in surprise. "Go on."

She hesitated.

"There is something more; tell me."

"Oh, I don't know," she said; "I only thought that your drawing used to be looser and gave more life to some of your former work. I thought that one of your pictures showed a greater love

for color. In my portrait you seem to be laboring too much with detail and neglect the general effect."

"The idea of your being in the slums. Don't you know you have the instinct of a true colorist."

"A useless gift, when I can't paint anything but miserable little sketches. I have no confidence in myself. Besides, by going into the slums I rid the world of another dejected artist. While I create nothing, I have nothing to despise."

"I shan't parry that shaft," I said. "Its aim is too true. Come, let us begin the sitting."

Dorothy seated herself on the model-throne, and resting her head against one hand, assumed the thoughtful pose of the picture. The spirited light faded from the eyes. Her glance became calm and soulful. I studied her face carefully.

"It's no use," I exclaimed. "I

should like to burn this wretched canvas. I'm in no mood for work."

"If only I could paint like you;" she said reproachfully.

"You are much better off. You feel without the torment of failing."

"You ought to starve in a garret, Guy. You are ungrateful."

"Merely because I am dissatisfied with my work; would you prefer to have me complacent?"

"No, but I wish you would accept yourself at the world's value."

"What does that amount to? The world is nothing but a huge bargain counter where the ignorant trade. If a man wants to be taken up he has merely to become an oddity, and mark himself in glaring figures."

"Oddity in art is sometimes originality. If I were an artist I should not object to being the fashion."

"Fashion to-day is oblivion to-morrow."

"Then work for posterity."

"A poor solace for lifetime failure."

She burst out laughing. "You first abuse your fashionable success, and then despise future appreciation. How thoroughly inconsistent!"

"I know it. That is the trouble with painters. We have a hundred hearts instead of one; each with its separate longing. Oh, well, the greater our sympathy, the deeper our conception of nature. Turn your head a little to the left, please. There! Don't move for a moment."

"If you always paint according to your feelings, Guy," she laughed, "you must be using lots of blue. Take care, my stockings may be that color, but it does n't extend to my nose."

"I am quite aware of that. You are too intricate to be painted in one hue. You are what we artists call a beautiful disorder."

"What impertinence," she said

resentfully. "An explanation is the least apology you can offer."

"Please, I beg you again, don't move your head."

"I 'll be quiet myself, but I shan't promise to keep my temper quiet. "A beautiful disorder—I like that!"

"You don't understand," I said apologetically. "A well regulated girl of position might discuss art and poetry with the fluency of an attentive parrot, and dress with the taste of a Parisian dressmaker; she might even dabble in the occult for the purpose of adding a dash of mystery to her flirtation, but she would know nothing about dynamics or Greek roots, and philanthropy would be merely a big word in the dictionary."

I admired that quick play of indignation in her glance. Dorothy cannot dissimulate. Her soul speaks through her eyes.

"So you think I ought to be a lay

figure for French dressmakers to show their wares upon. You wish I had a rubber ball sort of heart, capable of bounding back into shape after every impression—a plaything for men."

"I wish I could paint you with that angry expression—the fire in the eyes—the color in the cheeks. It is stunning."

"I won't be abused, Guy; I won't have it."

"There! I ought to begin another picture with an imperious pose, and that indignant look."

She burst out laughing. "I never know when I am being chaffed until it is too late."

"How delightfully feminine you are after all!"

"After all."

"Yes, you are not like other girls. You never talk about your flirtations."

"It is a woman's duty to be amusing. Shall I talk about yours?"

"Do n't misjudge me," I exclaimed hastily. "I am ready to join battle on any issue. Shall it be art, science or religion? A Frenchman once said that without those there would be nothing in the world but appetites and affairs."

"Did he mean love affairs?" she asked.

"No, love is not an affair; it is an art."

"Men make it an artifice," she replied sharply.

"It all depends upon the lover. An artist's love is the purest art, because it is sincere and inspired."

"Nonsense! Men are all alike. Your love is a dress up affair for moments of leisure. You do n't let it bother you during business hours, but keep it folded up carefully like your evening clothes, to be taken out when you wish to be amused."

"You are fortunate in being able to

ticket man's love so readily. How about a woman's?"

'"Alas! The love of women! it is known to be a lovely and a fearful thing!'"

"Given when least valued, denied when most desired," I added.

She looked at me thoughtfully. "We are both becoming cynical, Guy. Cynicism is only a cheap disguise for a bad temper."

I smiled. "Rather say optimism is merely a synonym for self-sufficiency."

"Guy, how dare you? You know I have told you repeatedly that I am an optimist."

"I should think the only reliable partisan of that creed must be one who having loved and lost had lived to win and love another. The judgment of such a one would at least be impartial."

"So you doubt my sincerity?"

"No, I am merely ignorant of your experience."

"As to that I can say frankly that I have never been in love."

Her eyes met my doubtful glance and turned away slowly. She smiled nervously, I thought. Did she speak the truth? I asked myself.

"But you have theories about love," I said finally.

"I suppose the inexperienced always have," she replied. "For my part, I believe love must be community of taste and sentiment. Based on anything else it would be merely infatuation."

"Yes," I said, feelingly. "Infatuation is a poison we all taste, but love is the rare antidote few ever discover in time."

She clasped her hands about her knees and gazed at the floor thoughtfully. The dark eyes, partly closed by their white lids, were dreamy and spiritual; there was a touch of sadness in the delicate line of her lips. I felt that as an artist I might idealize Dorothy's

face as my conception of the Madonna; but as a lover—

"Guy!" she said, abruptly. "It just occurred to me that one's heart is a sort of crucible where the qualities of one's nature are continuously combining like chemicals."

"What a material remark to make with such an ideal expression. I thought you were at least soaring on empyrean clouds, yet, I suppose a woman's eyes are always a mask for her emotions. However, I wish you would explain your chemistry of the heart."

"Why, when compassion, sympathy and inclination blend, love is the result. If resentment is added jealousy is the reaction, and a few molecules of irritation turn the whole mixture into fury."

"But who does the mixing?"

"The other person, I suppose."

"I fear your ideas of love are not as reliable as your knowledge of art."

"You have instructed me in art," she said maliciously.

"I am equally proficient in the other; may I instruct you in that also?"

Our eyes met accidentally.

"It would be such a pity to spoil friendship," she laughed. "After all it is the only real solace in life."

"Friendship is not a solace," I said bitterly; "it is merely a sophistry; it only begs the question of love."

She did not answer. For a moment —it may have been an hour—I painted in silence.

"There!" I exclaimed suddenly; "You have made me forget myself, and I think I have saved the picture. Please do n't let me touch it again."

In the wildest moments of my passionate love for Moira, I was never free from the thought of danger. I swam with the torrent of my feelings, unable

to turn and stem the current, but certain that I was borne on to destruction.

Then the gentle, satisfactory love for Dorothy calmed my heart, and it seemed that I had reached a cool, delightful mere where I might float dreamily to the end of time. There were no hidden rocks and dangerous eddies there.

But behind me were the rapids I had passed, and before me I heard the sullen roar of a cataract.

At moments I longed to feel the rush of waters against my breast.

But I held back. Dorothy herself sent me to danger.

To-night the perilous fascination mounted to my brain; it maddened me.

Can I think clearly now? Shall I yield? It means the end of everything.

I wish I could forget Moira's eyes. There they are, tormenting, tantalizing.

And to-morrow —

I cannot think about to-morrow.
Better the past.

Yes, that was a heavenly hour on the lagoons—an unforgettable hour. We were alone together in the gondola, and around us was that summer night. The waves lapping the prow, rocked us lazily, dreamily. Over the black water darted the graceful craft, impelled mysteriously, as though by a phantom hand. A gleaming paper dragon fluttered at the bow; along the dark stretch of the lagoon myriad fairy lamps glistened at the water's edge, and everywhere a flood of pallid light fell on the miraculous forms of giant palaces, standing white and marvelous against the blackness of the night. Here a dome etched in fire; there a fountain misty white; then purple, orange, green, spreading its hazy veil before the gnome-like crowds which hovered on

the banks marvelling like ourselves. Over the waters floated the dreamy strains of music; out of the night glided spirit-ships, mellow with the light of lanterns, mirthful with the songs of Venice. Then crimson fire curled into the night, shedding its eerie glow upon the magic city; and, hissing, squirming like a nest of serpents, a flight of rockets shot upwards from behind the peristyle, spreading their fiery tails against the sky, then bursting in a nebula of stars.

The gondolier ceased rowing; we drifted slowly with the waves. Dorothy's head fell listlessly against the high back of the seat; her hand, beryl-like in the dim light of lanterns, rested on the neck of a brazen sea horse.

I watched the faint play of lights in her dark eyes, the deep defining shadows of her face; then as we floated on past some mammoth portico where torches flamed, her delicate profile, white

against a vivid stretch of water, was like inlaid silver in a mass of beaten gold.

Her dreamy eyes looked into mine. "I never understood the word heavenly before;" she said.

"Nor I, Love," I whispered half under my breath.

She turned away slowly, as though she had not understood. I did not mean to speak. The quiet tone with which those words passed my lips startled me. I felt no anxious thrill as when I spoke to Moira. Could this be love?

We drifted on in silence. My hand touched hers. For a moment she returned the pressure, then, with a frightened movement drew her hand away. Our eyes met. My lips opened to speak.

"No, Guy," she said. "Let us dream to-night."

Then the weeks rolled by with the tender sympathy of that moment unbroken. We met with the frequency of lovers but never a word of love. Our talk was of art and nature, and in our common passion for the beautiful we found the expression of our love.

Dreamy, enchanting love, it seemed to me, for it lacked the reality of another passion. I missed the pulse beats.

And yet I loved.

Yes, a new sensation of strange and subtile delicacy was in my heart, but my soul was not stirred as by the touch of Moira's lips. A thousand times I asked myself the question: Is this new-born love all satisfying?

After to-night I dare not answer.

How clearly Dorothy read my thoughts. Perhaps she was right in not trusting implicitly to time, but had she remained at Hallim Hall I might not have spoken—at least not until I had seen Moira. But that visit to Dorothy's

Wisconsin country home—was it only last week? Time is unconscionable—we were alone with nature then.

That hour by the woodside, when the shadows deepened on the turf and we sat together watching the crimson sun-disk fade behind the line of purple hills. It was then that I saw love flutter in her eyes.

"Dare I tell her?" I asked myself.

But love cannot dream eternally; that very evening it awoke.

We left the stifling house and walked alone into the night. Under the shadowy trees we stood gazing at the sleeping lake. The winds were still, and fleecy clouds hung motionless among the trees; sweet country vapors scented the air, and about our thoughts was woven the mysterious spell of silence.

Then a night breeze fluttered over the water, and the white fire of the moon burning through the clouds shed its light on the face beside me.

Her eyes met mine, and the tenderness of their glance thrilled me. It was a thrill of pride, of possession.

I touched the softness of a dress.

"Dorothy!" I called impulsively.

She looked at me tremblingly. One moment, and she was in my arms, obedient to the summons of my soul to hers. The soft fragrant hair touched my face, and the tremor of "lips which never knew to kiss before" told me the love I had awakened.

"I love you, Dorothy, I love you."

She threw her arms about my neck. "Oh, can I believe it!" she cried.

"My darling," I said; "till to-night I have never lived."

"And to-morrow?"

"There can be no to-morrow to my love."

I saw doubt in her glance. Her eyes grew sad and thoughtful. I kissed her. The lips were cold; gently she drew away.

"Oh, Guy," she said, taking my hands and holding them in a close grasp; "I wish I could forget your voice that night at Hallim Hall, when you spoke of her,—that look in your eyes. A woman who loves is never mistaken. Have you ceased to care for her?"

"Yes."

"And if you were to see her?"

"It is over — dead." I trembled as one trembles at the thought of danger.

"Guy," she said sadly; "if you should meet her some day and find out that you had made a terrible mistake it would kill me. I must know; you must go to her."

"It is over. Believe me."

"You must go to her. If you love her you are free. Go to her—and—and come back—if you can."

Forgive me, Dorothy, I was a coward beside you then. Your love was as

floating wreckage to a drowning sailor. It meant salvation.

"I love you with my whole life," she said; "but I must have all your love—all."

Even then the vision of another face was faintly in my thoughts, and, cowardlike, I temporized.

"Don't send me to her," I said; "that love is dead, believe me, it is. It would be useless—and painful to her, perhaps."

She looked full into my eyes.

"Go," she answered; "and remember you are free to do as you will."

I kissed her.

"I will not go," I cried.

"You must."

"Some time, somehow you will come back, I believe it;" she said.

What confidence was in her heart that night.

And how unmerited.

Yet as I stood there in the moon-

light with Dorothy, I had no fear. I loved her with a purer love than I had ever known. She was my ideal.

What hope is there now—after to-night?

Oh Moira! Moira! dare I meet your eyes again—your lips?

And yet—I do not love you.

No! a thousand times no!—it is not love.

But should your white arms coil round my neck, should your soft hair fall about my shoulders—

My God! am I a man?

I am free to choose. My duty is to choose.

Is not the choice already made? Can I go back to Dorothy after to-night? What could I tell her?

That my reason loves her: that my heart—that my heart beat with maddening throbs beneath the gaze of another's eyes.

Oh Dorothy! how you would despise

me — even while your heart was breaking.

And yet —

This room is stifling. I want air. Here I have been sitting through the sultry night with the windows closed.

How silent the sleeping city.

Beyond the shadowy park the first ray of morning gleams on the water of the harbor. White, then red, flash the beacons; the pigmy lights of the anchored yachts glisten faintly, and beyond the black line of breakwater slumbering Michigan lies, calm and silvery in the dawning light. Lake and sky blend in a bank of purple mist; light, fleecy clouds float spirit-like among the stars and across the faint blue heavens is a glow of orange light. Another day is breaking.

Another day — to many the worst, to some the last of life — and to me?

"To-morrow you may come back, but it must be for always. There must be no other woman."

Dorothy! Dorothy!

I cannot think of you — I dare not.

How bright that morning star glistens there above the bridge.

The dark clouds float across the sky. Over the burnished water glance rays of golden light: the sky is deeper blue, and there a tinge of greenish yellow blends with the reddish light which glows above the fog bank.

What soft, exquisite harmony of color.

Ah, nature! what are you?

A multiplication of things, that is all! leaves, grass, trees, water, sky; yet I see in you symbols of my thoughts. You are no longer things but friends who speak a language I alone can understand.

The shadowy grass grows mossy green, patches of crimson light gleam upon the placid lake, sharp and clear is the line

of the horizon against the purple cloud of mist. The smoke from a chimney floats mournfully over the water, half obscuring the distant forest of masts.

Birds twitter beneath my window.

Those ripples which dance across the lake; the freshening breeze creates them; they appear and disappear in the infinite waste whence they came. A moment, that is all. What else is life? An illusion, a phantom, a dream of the great God Pan, whose being is all nature.

Now the sky glows vivid crimson, and through the mist a flood of golden light streams across the lake. The sun-king is awake and, casting off his coverlet of royal purple, he glances in dazzling splendor upon his realm of day.

In welcoming clamor the stormy acclamations of his subjects break forth. An engine hisses, hoofs clatter on the cobble stones, bells clang and piping

shrill the voice of vagabond humanity proclaims the spirit of the day. "Morin paprees—Morin paprees."

The city is awake.

"To-morrow you may come back, but it must be for always."

That to-morrow has dawned.

"There must be no other woman."

IV.

"Who is it can read a woman?"

Cymbeline.

THERE is a saloon at the corner of the alley and colored lights shine among the bottles in the window. Down the dark passage a lantern burns above a narrow battered door, where I read the words "Stage Entrance." The cobbles glisten at my feet; walls rise into the night, and beyond is darkness, gloomy, impenetrable.

A girl brushes past me. Her hands are in the pockets of a light grey jacket; she walks with a quick swing and disappears through the stage door.

I take a step into the alley—then hesitate.

Mechanically I turn and gaze into the

window of the saloon. Above the rows of bottles and demijohns is a mirror in which my own face is reflected. How startling one's face is at times. Those dark lines under the eyes. Yes, I was up all night thinking, thinking—and to what end?

Well, I cheated sleep, which is better than cheating myself.

So that is the face with which I try to impose upon the world. Yes, I, myself, whatever I be, go about under that mask, and I wonder how many other fools see the fool behind it. Ah, well, every fool thinks he is a philosopher, and every philosopher must know he is a fool, because the more he knows the less he knows he knows; and the only thing I know is that I am wretched and hate that face in the glass yonder.

"By Jove! Moira's picture! Pythian Theatre. Two weeks, commencing Monday, September 20th."

"Can I never get away from your

beautiful, wicked face? Ah, Moira, I must see you again."

Yes, you are well placed among the bottles and the demijohns.

The road to ruin.

You will make the running fast enough, Moira; it will soon be over.

Do you care for that man Kildale, I wonder—or for anyone but yourself.

I won't look at you.

Bottles! bottles! rows of them. "Old Cutter Whiskey," "Clark's Rye," "G. H. Mumm & Co., Rheims," "Old Tom Gin." I shall choose gin to end it all. There is a drunken ring to the word—it would make a beast of one sooner.

I am restless, desperate. It is the darkness and the lights. I should like to do some evil thing—it is the brute in me.

How easy it would be to grab that old fellow's watch and cut down the alley. A hue and a cry, "Stop thief! Police!" —a dash for liberty, and then—well it

would be exciting, and for the moment I should forget.

God! how I hate myself.

Success, happiness, love—all for the glance of a woman's eyes. Imbecility, gone mad—and yet—ever since last night—Oh, I can't help it, I must see her again.

Will nothing stop me? Dorothy, where are you to-night? Look at me; save me.

No.

"You must go to her; if you love her you are free."

I saw her last night, Dorothy—and—is it not my duty to see her and know the truth forever?

Shall I go?

Of course I am going. The sooner it is done the sooner it is over.

Why do I walk so stealthily and tremble?

"A card from the manager, all right;" mumbles the stage doorkeeper.

Why did n't he stop me? I wish he had.

And so I stumble through this dark passage, and up this flight of tortuous steps to the stage. It is fate I suppose. Kismet, the Turks would say; and yet I might have changed it all.

There was a time when I was fascinated by such a scene as this. Mysterious figures skulking through the gloom in the wings; tawdry dressed chorus people huddled under a flaring gas jet; the leer of painted women—it disgusts me to-night.

Here in the right entrance I shall be out of harm's way.

A street in Tunis I should call this setting. Oriental houses with draperies and hanging balconies—a mosque, a French café, and at the back the blue Mediterranean with a fleet of warships at anchor—all painted with great ugly daubs of paint.

I am glad I am not a chorus girl to

be pulled about and sworn at by that ruffian of a stage manager.

Is Moira dressed yet, I wonder? Shall I rap at her door? No, I will wait.

What a cowardly fool I am.

By Jove! that girl peeping through the curtain is pretty. What dainty little hands and feet. That Turkish costume is becoming too, with the gold embroidered cap caught on her yellow curls.

And there comes a big turbaned brute, who lays his coarse, dirty hand on her little waist, and they walk off arm in arm. Well, I envy those chorus people. Contrition is the penalty we pay conventionality. When one is without the social pale, there is no fear to masquerade as conscience.

"Hello Wharton! where did you come from?"

A French chasseur is at my elbow. Under the grease-paint and dragoon

mustachios, I recognize Herbert Darington, tenor of the Frivolity Opera Company.

"Why Darington, how are you," I say, as I take his hand.

"So, so; this touring the provinces does n't agree with me—the climate; I shall have pneumonia if I stay in Chicago a week."

"If a tenor could n't find fault he would n't be a tenor."

"I 'll let that pass if you will follow me. I 've got a pint bottle hid away to give me a bracer before I go on."

"Very well, anything for a change."

"Just look at the stuff they have piled in my room," he says, pointing to a heap of theatrical rubbish stowed away at one end of the three cornered apartment. "They might as well put me in the property room and be done with it. I 've only got one glass, such as it is; you take it and I 'll drink out of the bottle," and he draws the cork and

pours the sparkling wine into an old jelly tumbler.

"By the way," I say, as I take a seat on an iron bound trunk, labelled "Frivolity Opera Co., Theatre;" "I hear you are leaving at the end of the season."

"Yes."

"Does n't the management treat you well?"

"Yes—but—"

"You want to star?"

"No—well, you won't mind my speaking out now you 've quit her. But Marston, well she thinks a tenor exists merely for her to hang her voice on. Temper—a madhouse is n't in it with her."

"You surprise me."

"*You* ought to know," he says with an insinuating tone which irritates me.

"We never quarreled," I replied sharply.

"Oh, you need n't get angry, old

man; I'm not the only sufferer, she drove Vance out of the company six months ago."

"I should think Ledger would put the screws on."

"Ledger—Why she owns him."

"Does she?"

"Where have you been?" he asks with an incredulous smile.

I drain my glass in silence and put it down among the sticks of grease-paint and hare's feet.

"By Jove! there goes the opening chorus;" says Darington. "I go on directly, good bye."

I follow him as he swaggers off into the wings; his sabre clanking at his heels; his cap perched conceitedly on his curly head.

A singer's conceit is in direct ratio to the height of his voice. Bassos are usually good fellows, and baritones often endurable, but a tenor—

Two little gloved hands close my

eyes suddenly. There is an odor of roses and a merry familiar laugh.

"Guy, you dear old reprobate, so you are here, are you?"

"Moira," I cry, seizing both her hands: "you knew I would come, you knew it."

"Well, you need n't squeeze my hands off."

"Oh, Moira."

"Let go, Guy, you 're hurting me; there that 's a dear."

"You bewitching creature!"

She smiles. Her eyes are almost tender.

I gaze into her face earnestly.

"Well, what do you think of me? You 've looked at me long enough."

"You 're almost perfect—but—well you know I hate to see you in tights, it cheapens you."

"Oh, no, it does n't. I get ten guineas a week more than I did in female parts."

"Well I do n't like it."

"But the public does," she says with an impudent toss of the head; "and I belong to the public."

"Moira, Moira, I do n't believe in you, but I—"

"Hush! I must go on, that 's my cue, wait for me here."

There she goes. A thousand hands applaud her.

Moira, you sorceress. You have them spell bound too. But I adore you to-night. I adore you just as you are. There 's no one like you. Your little feet with the glistening patent leather boots, how daintily they keep time to the music. How gracefully that white cloak falls from the shoulders of that blue chasseur coat; the little red cap and the little gloved hands, and the flashing sabre—and the clanking spurs, and the grace and charm of it all; who could help being fascinated by such a creature?

But the paint and the powder, and the vulgar chorus throng — and the publicity of it all. I hate it.

And that conceited beast Darington holding her in his arms and pressing his painted lips to hers. Yet I must expect just that sort of thing night after night. One pays dearly for a certain kind of happiness.

"Marston is in great form to-night, aint she?" says Ledger, the vulgar brute, at my elbow.

"Yes." I mutter.

"I tell you what it is, there 's money in legs. The receipts tumble twenty quid a night when we put on a skirt piece. But ta, ta; I must go in front."

That glance into the wings for Ledger. How could she?"

There she comes at last. The applause of countless hands ringing in her ears.

"Three encores for my solo, Guy. I never get less than two. That fool

Darington spoiled the duet. "Whew! but my boot pinches. I must take it off. Here, pull, Guy. There that 's better.

She lays a hand on my shoulder to steady herself, as she stands there holding the wee bootless foot off the ground.

Our eyes meet.

"Guy, you 're a dear to-night. Do you love me a little?"

"With all my heart and soul."

"My heart is too good for you, but here 's my soul," she laughs, slapping my hand with the little boot.

"Be serious for once, Moira."

"I leave that for her. By the way, did you see her to-day, did you tell her —here, give me that boot quick; I 've got to go on—steady me, you stupid; there, my! but it hurts. Good bye. I 'm on till the end of the act. Meet me on the other side; I dress there."

She turns back and laughs: "Tell me about her then," she whispers.

The little devil!

One could endure unhappiness were it not for the happiness of others. But I have made my own bed and I must lie in it.

I should like to walk boldly across the stage. Imagine the consternation I would create. On second thought I will squeeze myself behind the blue Mediterranean and the war ships.

I wonder if I can do it without agitating the waves unduly?

I'll risk it.

Lamps, carpets, divans, nargilehs—a mess of everything. It is too crowded on this side. I can't stay here. That entrance next the stage manager is the best place for me.

"May I stand here, Mr. Hopkins?"

"Umph," he grunts without taking his eyes from the stage.

Silently I watched the changing picture on the stage.

Thirty painted women and not one lovable face; yet Moira is there.

"Watch Marston look at that new soubrette; there's a devil of a row on between them two," grunts the autocrat at my side.

"What's up?"

"Jealousy. Marston 's getting too bloomin' free with that tongue of hers. If she aint careful I 'll give her such a talking to as she never had." Then he curses beneath his breath at some delinquent chorus girl.

"Watch the new grouping in this finale. It's immense. Took me a fortnight to work it up."

The fiddles screech; a flood of light, white, green, then red, changes the tawdry dresses chameleon like; and amid swaying heads and waving arms the great curtain slowly falls. A round of applause, louder, louder it swells, another tableau, then when the act drop thuds upon the boards the little satin slippered feet of principals and chorus girls scamper towards the dressing

rooms, and stage hands scuffling, shouting, cursing, demolish the street of Tunis.

Moira, flushed with another triumph, hurries off the stage, bearing in her little arms a huge bouquet of roses.

"The piece is going splendidly, Guy. The house was cold at first, but I woke them up."

"As you always do."

"Yes, there is no life like it."

"But I wish you would leave the stage, Moira."

"And marry you?" she laughs.

"Yes."

"Think of me sitting in a chimney corner with a lot of sprawling brats, or even playing tame cat in the studio while you paint—it 's absurd, Guy."

"Is n't there something better in life than excitement?"

"Excitement Guy! I could n't live without it. No, I love this life more than I could love you, or any man.

There, I must hurry. You can come in and see me when it is proper—how absurd: but I must keep up appearances. Parker here will tell you when I am ready. And by the way, Parker, did you get that brandy? Good bye, Guy."

Love is the devil. Yes, the devil. If I shut my teeth and say I won't why can't I stick to it. There is not a single lovable thing about that girl except her eyes—and they torture. I hate her.

Why does that soubrette look at me so triumphantly? Perhaps she realizes how becoming her pink and blue costume is. Muriel d'Ancona! She was Jane Brown in the chorus last year. She has pretty eyes though, and plenty of go. I will trust her to get on.

"Please, Mr. Wharton, Miss Marston says you may come in now."

"Very well, Parker."

In a dingy little room, amid powder puffs and rouge pots, Moira is hooking

the collar of her dress. The delicate pink and baby blue bodice, with huge puffy sleeves and pointed tails has a dash which suits her figure. The gas light flares on her painted face. She looks older.

"Do n't stand there like a duffer, Guy; say something."

"About you, I suppose. You look charming, as you always do."

"You are too dull to pay compliments to-night. Tell me about the confiding little creature who has been silly enough to fall in love with you. I suppose she is pretty and simpers delightfully, and looks up into your face with big dreamy eyes fairly watering with love."

"All women are not like you."

"You are cross enough to eat my head off, Guy. Perhaps I wrong her. Perhaps she does n't simper and cuddle; perhaps she throws her arms around you and hugs. Does she?"

"I won't answer that."

"Then go and talk to some other woman—that Jane Brown with the French name will take up with anything in trousers."

"You seem to admire her taste in clothes at least."

"What do you mean?"

"You have a pink and blue gown like hers."

"Nonsense."

"I just saw her leaving her dressing room. I should think her gown was turned out of the same mould as yours."

"The cat!"

"Send for Mr. Hopkins, Parker."

She stamps the floor with her little foot.

"How dare she, the little viper! The impudence, the conceit of the thing; what is she? A creature from the streets; the chorus was too good for her, and now she dares—"

"Moira."

"Do n't speak to me."

She paces the floor muttering words I thought no woman would dare to speak.

The door opens, and Hopkins, pale and frightened, skulks into the room.

"I shall not go on, Mr. Hopkins," says Moira, her eyes flashing fire.

"But, Miss Marston."

"That protégée of yours, that Jane Brown, dares wear a dress like mine. I shall not go on."

"But the stage is waitin', think of the public."

"That for the public!" she cries, snapping her fingers contemptuously. "That hussy must change her gown and apologize."

"Now, Miss Marston," the fellow pleads. "There aint time for 'er to change. She has the stage. The orchestra is back, the curtain goes up directly. Now, just to please me, there 's a dear."

"Don't dear me," she cries suddenly, throwing a silver hair brush at the offending manager. Hopkins dodges the missile. It strikes the door and falls to the floor. A sickly smile fades from his lip.

"Miss Marston," he says with more firmness; "the stage is waitin', unless you are ready to go on, your understudy takes the part."

"Very well," she answers, with a shrug of her shoulders; "I leave the company to-morrow."

"The stage is waitin'."

"Unless that creature changes her gown, I do not go on."

"The stage is waitin'. I will give you just two minutes," he replies, pulling an enormous watch from his pocket by its massive gold chain.

"Where is Mr. Ledger?"

"I manage the stage, Miss Marston."

"Parker, go find Mr. Ledger."

The maid departs. Moira seats her-

self before the glass and calmly smoothes her hair. Hopkins paces the floor. Finally he approaches her.

"Now, look here," he says in conciliatory tones, "what 's the use of this rumpus anyhow? Miss d'Ancona is in the wrong, and I know it, but it can't be helped. Let her wear the gown tonight, and you change yours. You do n't go on at first, you know. I'll dock her a week's salary if you will. Now, do be reasonable."

"I demand an immediate apology from her."

"Well, she won't give it," he mutters.

"Why not accept Mr. Hopkins' proposal, just for the sake of harmony?" I suggest.

She turns and looks at me, her eyes flashing. "Mind your own business, Guy."

There is a rap at the door.

"Come in," calls Moira.

The door opens and Ledger enters. His studs glisten and his linen shines more than usual, while through the open door is wafted a nauseous odor of scent and hair oil.

Moira glances up indifferently.

"I sent for you to say that I have been grossly insulted by a chorus girl your stage manager has seen fit to put in the caste. Unless she apologizes or is discharged immediately, I leave the company. That is all."

She takes up a hand-glass and examines her back hair.

Ledger looks nervously at Moira, then at the stage manager.

"Come with me, Hopkins," he says, "and find the girl. I will settle her in short order."

Hopkins jams his hat on the side of his head, and plunging his hands into his pockets, follows his chief from the room. Moira hums a tune and gazes at herself in the mirror. There is a de-

termined self-satisfied look in her eyes. I pace the floor. A thousand incoherent thoughts rush through my brain. I feel like one stunned. I cannot think clearly. No, my nerves are too shattered. As I stand and look at that woman, a feeling of repulsion, yes, of hate, enters my heart.

How long is it? Five minutes, an hour, I do not know. Ledger has returned. Hopkins skulks in the doorway.

The manager lays his hand on Moira's shoulder. "It's all right, my dear. She is discharged. The understudy has her part."

Moira looks up and smiles.

"You are a dear, Harry," she says, patting his cheek with her fan.

Hopkins looks at me despondently.

"There aint any discipline," he whispers, "since Marston mashed the guv'nor."

The performance is finished. I am waiting for Moira. She is always the last to leave the theatre.

By the light of a single gas jet, flickering near the property room, a stage hand is sprinkling the dusty boards. Bare, whitewashed walls loom prison-like about me; here and there a pile of scenery rests aslant against the sombre bricks. Occasionally some thin-faced actor with shabby hat and well worn ulster steals from the dressing-rooms above, or a hungry chorus girl with little high heeled boots steps quickly across the stage and disappears.

And why do I wait? To be tortured? No, she no longer has that power over me. I begin to know her at last.

How my steps creak on the deserted stage. There's an open wicket in the iron fire curtain; it might amuse me to look at the empty theatre.

How huge and desolate it seems. Through a distant door streams a flood

of light. All else is gloom. The rows and rows of empty seats, the galleries with Holland coverings guarding the paint and gilt work; the silence and the vastness of the place—it is deathlike as my thoughts.

Oh Dorothy, Dorothy! dare I ask forgiveness?

I can feel the strange shock of your kiss, your soft fragrant hair touches my face; then your lips grow cold; your eyes reproach me.

That was a sad sweet moment.

I have seen her, Dorothy. That love is dead; believe me, it is dead. I know her at last.

"Wake up, Guy; I pinched you twice. Are you asleep?"

"Moira!"

"Why, I actually believe you were thinking about her," she laughs, dragging me away. "It is positively rude, Guy."

"Yes, I was thinking, Moira."

"Oh, come along, you stupid, there is a horrible draught here, and you have no right to think, unless it be charming things to say to me."

Sullenly I follow her.

And I thought I loved that woman.

We reach the dark and tortuous step leading to the alley.

"Hold me tight, Guy; I don't want to fall."

Yes, I can place my arm about her waist without one thrill — and yet this very night. But who can analyze the vagaries of passion. I hate her now, her vanity, her selfishness. The touch of her hand seems tainted.

At the stage door a horse stands nervously champing his bit. A brougham is waiting in the alley.

Silently I open the door. Moira enters.

"Shut the door, Guy; what are you waiting for?"

"I am not going, Moira."

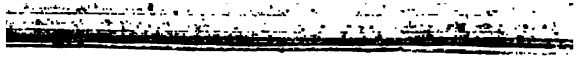
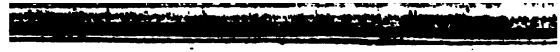
Her eyes meet mine. "Who asked you to come?"

I gaze at her in amazement, for there is a man in the brougham. By the faint light of the carriage lamp I recognize his features.

It is d'Argenteuil.

Moira laughs.

"Good night, Guy; give my love to Dorothy Temple."

THE END.

THE PRINTING WAS DONE AT
THE LAKESIDE PRESS, CHICAGO,
FOR STONE & KIMBALL, PUB-
LISHERS.